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JOSEPH T. PAND BARNES

MEMOIRS  
OF  
BERTRAND BARÈRE

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC  
SAFETY DURING THE REVOLUTION

TRANSLATED BY  
NOW FIRST TRANSLATED BY  
DE V. PAYNE

PARTS—VOLUME I  
IN FOUR VOLUMES



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

THESE Memoirs of Barère have never before appeared in English. Mr. Payen-Payne has faithfully translated them from the French Edition, in four volumes, origioally issued in 1842, and the present issue may be regarded as the standard and authoritative English Edition.

They will be found full of interest to those who wish to know all that is worth knowing concerning the most eventful period in Freoch History.

LONDON, *October*, 1896.



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

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THIS work was first published in Paris in 1843, two years after Barere's death, under the editorship of M. Hippolyte Carnot—the son of his colleague on the Committee of Public Safety, “the organiser of victory,” and the father of the martyred President of the Third Republic—and of M. David, the friend, but no kinsman, of the famous painter. Hitherto it has not been translated into English, although from his well-known hatred of England, we should have thought that Englishmen would have been interested in hearing what his views were.

Maeaulay wrote a lengthy review of this work, which appeared in the “Edinburgh Review” of April, 1844. Although he starts with an expression of open-mindedness, the article is a diatribe against Barère from beginning to end; there is scarcely a page that does not bristle with derogatory epithets. He sums up his extreme verdict thus :

“Our opinion, then, is this: that Barere approached nearer than any person mentioned in history or fiction, whether man or devil, to the idea



of consummate and universal depravity. In almost every particular sort of wickedness, he has had rivals. His sensuality was immoderate; but that was a failing common to him with many great and amiable men. There have been many men as cowardly as he, some as cruel, a few as mean; a few as impudent. There may also have been as great liars, though we have never met with them or read of them. But when we put everything together—sensuality, poltroonery, baseness, effrontery, mendacity, barbarity, the result is something which, in a novel, we should condemn as caricature, and to which, we venture to say, no parallel can be found in history.”

Now Macaulay never knew Barère, while Carnot did; and this is his opinion. He expected to meet a furious demagogue, a bloodthirsty tribune, and he found a man of polished wit, of literary expression, with all the elegant manners of the old school. The publication of these *Memoirs* he considers a duty to history and a service to one of the founders of French liberty, on whom calumny had been poured with no uncertain hand. Without trying to excuse his mistakes, he is shown to be a man of undoubted courage, rigid incorruptibility, and unselfish devotion to the great ideas of the French Revolution. Some of the phrases which have been attributed to him are proved to be inventions or to have been twisted from their original meaning; and we must recollect that his southern nature expressed more than it meant. His grand

appeal of the 23rd of August, 1793, for a Levy in Mass, likening the Republic to one vast besieged city, should excuse worse utterances than his. It runs "Two hundred and fifty forges shall in these days be set up round Paris to make gun barrels, in the sight of Earth and Heaven. From every hamlet to their departmental town, from every departmental town to the appointed seat of war, the Sons of Freedom shall march, their banner is to bear 'The French People risen against Tyrants. The young men shall go to the battle—it is their task to conquer the married men shall forge arms, transport baggage and artillery, provide subsistence, the women shall work at soldiers' clothes, make tents, serve in the hospitals, the children shall scrape old linen into surgeon's lint, the aged men shall have themselves carried into public places, and there, by their words, excite the courage of the young, preach hatred to kings and unity to the Republic.'

In one of his famous reports to the Convention he invented, or, at any rate, gave publicity to that masterpiece of invention, the suicidal sinking of the *Vengeur*, going down on the 1st of June with two hundred men shouting "Long live the Republic!" whereas they were in reality rescued by British boats. Carlyle was at first deceived by this account and calls Barre, with Burke, "the Anacreon of the Guillotine", but he acknowledges that he was ingenious, even genial, supple and graceful—an indispensable man, able to produce an orderly report

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cluded men who had long marched at his side, and others who in cruel strife had sometimes proved his persecutors.

Among the latter was Bertrand Barère. These two former members of the Committee of Public Safety had never set eyes on each other since the period when they had worked together for the defence of their country, without ever experiencing any sympathy one for the other. When the characters of these two men are compared, it is easy to explain their aversion. After more than twenty years a new national danger reunited them. As long as France did not need their services they had remained strangers to one another.

Then I saw Barère for the first time. I was too much of a child for my father to have dreamt of seriously teaching me contemporary history. The traditional calumnies taught then, as now, in schools, had warned me to expect a furious demagogue, a bitter and bloodthirsty tribune. How can I recognise him in this man with his playful wit, his literary diction, his elegant manners of the old school? Afterwards I saw him at Brussels in his exile; at Paris the day after the popular triumph which had recalled him to France; at Tarbes, his native town, with one leg already in the grave: everywhere the same. I always heard him express himself as to the Revolution with the freedom of speech of a man who had placed his own biography in the scales of historical justice, and who had seen upright intentions and services rendered to his country triumph over errors, and even faults.

In the course of our conversations, Barère often spoke to me of his Memoirs, and expressed a wish to entrust their posthumous publication to me. His entreaties

became more pressing when I went to visit him amidst his mountains in 1836. He thanked me for having accomplished the same pious duty with regard to another patriarch of our great political assemblies (Grégoire). How could I refuse to accept this touching proof of confidence, shared with a friend—the famous artist who has devoted his brush to perpetuate the figures of so many veterans of liberty? Fearing lest his Memoirs should experience the fate of many important political documents, hidden from posterity by hands that shun the day, Barère had been careful, in concert with M. David and myself, to place them beforehand in safety, and they were only brought out when the death of their author struck the hour of their publication.

The editing of these Memoirs occupied the last years especially of Barère's life; but the collecting of the materials was the result of patient and continual care. He was the more anxious to explain the deeds of the Revolution, because, not only had he been one of the principal authors of them, but also one of those who had suffered the most from hasty and passionate judgments; the more fitted to tell of the Revolution because he had gone through all its phases; the better situated to accomplish this task because, endowed with an immense mental activity and suddenly finding himself driven from public life, Barère set to work directly the political soil had ceased to tremble under his feet. From the first days of the Empire, he spent his time in jotting down the recollections with which his splendid memory was so richly stored, in arranging the documents he thought necessary to support them in portfolios, and in examining the opinions of contemporary historians in order to rightly judge them.



Important matters now take a more prominent place. Between the representation of a ballet and an excursion into the country, we find the account of a political event.

The struggle of the Parliaments, whose history Barère knows thoroughly, gives him an occasion to digress. He tells of the arrest of D'Esprémesnil, of the judicial court held at Versailles, and of the establishment of the plenary court. The hope that this raises in his breast proves the point at which he has arrived; he is favourable to constitutional progress, but far from any revolutionary ideas.

"A plenary court alone ought to register all the taxes and laws for the whole kingdom. It is composed of men devoted to the King from their position, and still more by their views. The members are nominated for life. They only have the right of remonstrance; *only the will of the King makes a law*. These words need no commentary, they are those of an Eastern Prince. However, if circumstances oblige the people to give way to the plan proposed by the Court, this new court can gain energy and influence over politics, its constitution may be improved. It is a kernel that a fine fruit may surround in the future. The States will want a seat in it and the provinces will have representatives on it; the Commons will sit by the side of the Parliament; we shall one day perhaps be worthy to be free; and we shall at last profit by our frequent trips to London without being obliged to become such cruel rebels as the proud inhabitants of that island."

The fall of Brienne, Necker's recall, the re-opening of the Paris Parliament, the second assembly of the Notables, all these events, that took place during young

Barère's stay in the capital, are the subjects of as many chapters in his account of his travels

Finally the States General are summoned and France is in the midst of the birth pangs of the great assembly that is to effect her regeneration. Barère leaves Paris, where the news of his father's death has reached him, without suspecting that he will be called upon to play an important part in the destinies of his country. What should prove this is that he only arrives home in March, when the elections were beginning, having broken off his diary in the middle of a description of the antiquities of Nîmes.

Nominated in succession elector, President of the Committee of Grievances, and finally First Deputy of Bigorre in the States General, Barère leaves in May to be present at the opening of the Assembly.

He then possessed a reputation at the bar of Toulouse that augured for him the most brilliant future. The patrimony he had just inherited was almost entirely founded on the existing state of things—that is to say, feudal dues and a judicial charge on the *senechaussée* of Tarbes. Yet he resisted much flattery from the privileged party, who wished to use his talents, and he did not hesitate to join the reformers' party.

Barère rapidly gained in the world the success that his looks and his brains promised him. Madame de Genlis thus describes him:

"He was young with a very good reputation, much wit and an insinuating manner, an agreeable exterior combined with manners both noble, gentle and reserved. He is the only man I have ever known to come from the depths of the country with a tone and manners that would not disgrace the Court and society. He was

lacking in knowledge, but his conversation was always pleasant and attractive; he displayed much good sense and a reasonable taste for arts, talent and country life. These gentle feelings, combined with a sharp wit, gave a touch of interest and true originality to his character and person.”<sup>1</sup>

“ However, the ambition of the young deputy began to carry him towards a more serious goal. From the moment of his arrival he began to connect himself with Bailly and Mirabeau, who welcomed him kindly, and their encouragement emboldened him to speak in a discussion, in which the most celebrated orators had spoken. The question was upon the constitution of the Assembly and the name it should adopt. Barère declared in favour of the National Assembly that an unimportant member had just suggested, which was a much better title than the puzzling verbose definitions proposed by Sièyes and Mounier. But he originated the idea that this title should not be definitely adopted before the minorities among the nobility and clergy had abandoned their respective orders to rally to the Third Estate. This delay would leave, in his opinion, no reason for deputies to desert who were equally devoted to the liberties of their country. We can see here already a half-and-half opinion, no doubt to be accounted for in a maiden speech, but which shows the character of the politician.

On the same day, the 17th of June, when the Commons took the great resolution of calling themselves the National Assembly, Barère, who was not satisfied with only speaking, took up journalism as well. He began the issue of the *Point du Jour* (*The Dawn*), for

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<sup>1</sup> “ Précis de la conduite de Madame de Genlis depuis la Révolution.” Published at Hamburg on the 12th of March, 1796.

the purpose of reporting the debates in the dramatic style that newspapers have now generally adopted. On the 20th of June he reported the meeting in the Tennis Court on his knee, the position in which the brush of David has represented him. In the first numbers of the paper, he was bold enough to echo the general discontent at the Royal Session of the 23rd of June. "It is like a thick cloud," said he, "which hides the throne from the eyes of the citizens."

On the 13th of July, thirty-six deputies, elected by ballot, were charged to go to Paris to calm the popular clamour. Barere was one of the number. Their difficult and dangerous mission developed into a triumph, for in the interval the Bastille had been taken.

Then came the night of the 4th of August, which has been called the "Saint Bartholomew of privileges." During his stay in Paris, Barere, as counsellor of the *senechaussee* of Bigorre, had published a pamphlet against the venality of judicial offices, and had proposed a few means of suppressing it.<sup>1</sup> His electors having given him a mandate that suited his own personal opinions, he profited by the occasion to carry it out. Then, in order to make his own conduct conform with his words, he gave up the office he had acquired by birth.

Having become a member of the Committee of General Warrants (*lettres de cachet*) together with Mirabeau, Treteau and Castellane, and having undertaken the real work together with the last named, he presided over the inspection of the entries in the calendars of all the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Venality of the magistracy destroyed.* With this quotation from Montesquieu: "Venality is good in monarchies because it makes men do as a family duty what they would not undertake for virtue." — *Esprit des Lois* l. b. v. ch. 19.

State prisons. There were thirty-two in Paris alone, situated in the most obscure districts, of which the magistrates were entirely ignorant. Thanks to the active solicitude of the two deputies charged with this obscure painful work, a crowd of captives were set at liberty. Two abominable abuses, established by the royal despotism especially in its own interests, or to pander to the pride, the hatred and the greed of powerful families, were unearthed and repressed. One was the detention of people they wished to get rid of under the pretence of madness ; the other, more recent and more difficult to discover, was getting them imprisoned abroad by taking advantage of the complaisance of foreign Courts. One Créqui, having offended his family, lay thus forgotten in the citadel of Stettin. "He was one of that privileged caste that did not interest me," says Barère, "but he was unfortunate and persecuted. I saw in him only a man. I told Montmorin, then Foreign Minister, of the order of the National Assembly, to free Créqui, banished and buried alive, 200 leagues from his country and relations."<sup>1</sup>

We have said that, in the new plan of the division of France, Barère had preserved his province of Bigorre under the name of the department of the Hautes Pyrénées. Such was the origin of the gratitude this department never ceased to show him. Barère, after his election to the General Council towards the end of 1833, reprinted the "Observations" which the resolution of the National Assembly had determined in 1790.<sup>2</sup> One must read in his

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<sup>1</sup> Defence of Barère before the National Convention.

<sup>2</sup> Observations presented to the National Assembly by M. Barère de Vieuzac, deputy for Bigorre, on the necessity of making a department of that country, of which Tarbes should be the chief town.—21 Dec., 1789.

Memoirs the account of his applications to the Committee of Division into Departments, of his struggles with the deputies of Bearn, who wanted, because they represented an ancient kingdom, to absorb the principality of Bigorre, and with the deputies of the town of Saint Gaudens, who were attempting the same thing on behalf of Comminge. One may judge of the importance he attached to his success by this last sentence in his "Observations"

"May Bigorre preserve for ever, under the title of department, its ancient independence and continue to tax itself and be governed by its own representatives! If, unhappily, this petition of its deputies had not obtained all the success it deserved, they would not be able to resolve to return to their country to witness, and perhaps be the victims of, the despair that the degradation and disgrace of this fine land would cause to their constituents"

If we ourselves have given an importance that may be thought exaggerated to this feature of Barre's life, the reason is because it is not merely a question of local patriotism, but of an opinion that held the principal place in his mind. All his conduct reveals a marked tendency to federalism, both his attachment to municipal institutions, which goes so far as to make him sometimes advocate those of the old regime, his repugnance for the centralisation of large capitals, which inspires in him frequent diatribes against the influence of Paris, and his political alliances with the Girondins, whom he defended on the 31st of May. If severe expressions on their doctrines and conduct are remarked in his later reports and writings, the reason was because he recognised that in reality the appeal to the provinces had been, as far

as they were concerned, a means of fighting the Republic just as the accusation of federalism served as a pretence to repress anti-revolutionary efforts. With Barère, on the contrary; provincialism was doubtless a sincere deliberate opinion. We ourselves have heard him say: "The country must be fertilised; without that you will not get true freedom." Besides, his Memoirs contain, on this point, the explanation of quite a system in which he relates the foundation of the Republic.

It must not be thought that we do not find in his manuscripts and in several of his reports passages composed in an anti-federalist spirit. These contradictions are the peculiar mark of his mind, according as he looks at things from the point of view of his favourite theories or is affected by the necessity of the times.

When the Assembly was deliberating on the new judicial organisation, Barère proposed the establishment of the jury in civil as well as in criminal cases, just as in England. "But," says he, "the routine of the old magistrates and barristers, together with judicial prejudices, caused the first part of the motion to be adjourned." When Cambacérès brought it up again later in the Convention, he again supported it warmly.

As men<sup>agm.</sup> now him. the Committee of Feudal Domains, Barère made a <sup>now</sup> of reports on the national forests, the domains and forests to be reserved for the king, etc., from August, 1789, to the May of the following year. Following his lead, the Assembly decreed that the property of the Crown could be alienated to provide for the needs of the State, that the King, like every other citizen, should pay land-taxes, that he should possess the right of hunting only over the properties of the Civil List and in parks





vehemence with difficulty when we recollect our own indignation on hearing a minister of the King declare in a full House the same doctrines, distinguishing between one's moral country and one's national country.

On the 12th of July, 1791, after the arrest of Louis XVI. at Varennes, Barère printed in the *Point du Jour* an address to the department of the Eastern Pyrenees, in which he boldly demanded a republic. However, when he was sent by the Assembly as the thirtieth to protect the return of the Royal Family to the Tuileries, he fulfilled its command as zealously and as firmly as his colleagues. Grégoire and himself had charge of the young Dauphin, whom they carried in their arms, while other deputies conducted his parents through an exasperated and threatening crowd.

This event, while giving an opening to republican ideas and their exponents in the Assembly, at the same time united in a common interest the partisans of a constitutional monarchy, who had up till then been divided on the most important points. Barère, who had not been among the former, now joined them to oppose the revision. This attempt, organised by those who, already frightened at the progress of liberal institutions, wished to restore to royalty part of its prerogatives, only found thirty-five opponents, of whom Barère was one. It was an abortive attempt from the point of view of its supporters, but it was sufficient to decrease distinctly the popularity of the new constitution. In the discussion that took place, Barère caused the propositions of the ministers as to the taxes, which had been proposed by Beaumetz and Duport, to be rejected. He established this principle, now a recognised one in political law, that in the matter of taxes there are not two authorities,

the only one is the people—that is to say, the deputies elected by it in a representative government.<sup>1</sup>

We have just said that Barère was not a Republican in the Constituent Assembly. In fact, there he was a moderate Parliamentarian, and his talents had shone with sufficient brilliance for the Constitutionals of the Court to think to give him the post of Home Secretary, in spite of his youth. This last vote with Pétion, Buzot, Robespierre and Grégoire, with reference to the revision, led him into a new path; not that this vote was contradictory to his opinions up till then, but it placed him in relations with a party to which hitherto he had been a stranger.

Barère in his *Memoirs* charges the Constituent Assembly with having committed suicide, and he adds: "All wise men would have wished it to prorogue, whilst forming itself into a legislative assembly to carry its own constitution into execution." He forgets that he himself had spoken thus: "You have been wise and magnanimous in following the noble and generous emotion that has rendered you all ineligible for the coming Legislature. A creator is not a part of a created universe, and those who have given their country a constitution do not, so to speak, belong to the social state that they have formed, ancient lawgivers have set you the example."<sup>2</sup>

This is another of the contradictions we have spoken

<sup>1</sup> "Opinion of M. Barère, Deputy of the Department of the Upper Pyrenees, spoken in the Sitting of the 27th of August, 1791, against the Initiative of the King and his Ministers concerning Public Taxes" Printed by order of the National Assembly

<sup>2</sup> "Speech of M. Barère, spoken on the 19th of May, 1791, on the Unlimited Re-election of Members of Legislatures."

of. Public opinion, which had at first applauded the disinterestedness of the Constituent Assembly, has come to look on it as a political mistake. Barère allows his way of looking at things to be so easily governed by the dominant opinion around him, that he thinks that he has never looked at them in any other way.

In the same speech from which we have just quoted, according to his tactful method, he takes a half-way position between those of Cazalès and Robespierre; he proposes to restrict the right of re-election to two legislatures only, after which two years must intervene before a man can be re-elected.

There is one serious question of political history that appears to have greatly exercised Barère's mind, and has left numerous traces in his manuscripts. Madame de Staël states it very clearly in these words: "Was there a constitution in France before the Revolution?"<sup>1</sup> It is a question on which many writers have founded the legality or illegality of the French Revolution. In a somewhat recent work, a prolific legist has gone so far as to declare the National Assembly a usurping power, for not having remained, according to the limits prescribed by this pretended constitution, a third order in the States-General; he has styled as felony the oath in the Tennis Court, by which the deputies promised not to separate before having given France<sup>2</sup> a fundamental law. Besides, party polemics had already dealt with this point. M. de Villèle, in 1814, had protested against the granted Charter, saying that Louis XVIII. had not the right to change in any way the form of ancient French govern-

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<sup>1</sup> Locré: "The Civil, Commercial and Criminal Legislation of France." (1826).

<sup>2</sup> "Considerations on the French Revolution," Part I., chap. ii.

ment. Such a doctrine could not displease a prince who had written "France must be given that ancient constitution which alone can make her happy and glorious,"<sup>1</sup> and had it not been for the dangers of this retrograde enterprise, he would not have brought himself to renounce it.

However that may be, from the dawn of the Revolution, and even before the Revolution, as we shall see, the same question had occupied men's minds. Calonne answers it in the negative in a work rebutted by M. de Montyon, but before that the Duc de Choiseul, writing to a French ambassador at Vienna, and Turgot writing to Dr. Price at London, turned their attention to it.<sup>2</sup>

These two important letters on which Barère founds his opinion tend indeed to prove the absence of any ancient constitutional law of the State. A solemn reply of Louis XVI. to the remonstrances of the Bordeaux Parliament, as to the ownership of alluvial land (29th of July, 1786) is still more explicit. Here are a few sentences from it: "It is not within your province to weigh in the balance my rights and those of my subjects. I alone am the supreme guardian of the interests of my people, which cannot be separated from my own. Your decrees and resolutions can never give you a title to resist my authority."

In the Court of Judicature, held on the 6th of August 1787, to register the edicts on the stamp duty and the

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Louis Stanislas Xavier, dated from Hameln, the 25th of January 1793.

<sup>2</sup> Turgot finishes his letter thus: "Do not reply in detail by post, for your answer will be most certainly opened by the authorities, and I shall be considered a great deal too friendly to liberty for a minister, even for a minister in disgrace."

27th of June on the convocation of these assemblies, while preferring the work in which he had co-operated, yet he shared the general enthusiasm. He wrote as follows :

“Here it is, this constitution so greatly looked forward to, which, like the stone tables of Moses, has come out of the holy mountain accompanied by thunder and lightning. Do not let anyone oppose it as only the work of a few days. In a few days the knowledge of every century has been collected. In one spot equality has laid down its benefits with touching simplicity ; further on, civil and political liberty have concisely and severely engraved their rights. In another place property, that wealth not only of owners, but also of those that are not, because all can and ought to become owners, has laid down its limits, and dedicated this base of all political society ; property, which, under the laws of a wise republic, is ever the reward of toil, economy and virtue, is solemnly recognised and assured ; philosophy has stipulated for the liberty of worship, politics for the peace of Europe, reason for education for all, the republic for popular societies, society for public works, humanity for aid to unfortunate citizens, and justice and law for the safeguard of so many rights.”

Many years later he wrote again :

“This constitution has been condemned without a possibility for judgment having been given, since not one of its articles has been carried out. People have never thought, or had the time to think, of making France really republican in interests, education and legislation. So being republican only in name, Bonaparte obtained a cheap victory on the 18th of Brumaire.”

The Committee of General Defence, which had been

created by the Legislative Assembly, and had rendered great services, was renewed by the Convention. Barere became a member first, and then its president. His *Memoirs* contain some curious particulars as to the disputes that arose in this committee between Danton and Gensonné, about Belgium. However, in the spring of 1792, the dangers of the new born republic, at home and abroad, showed the necessity of concentrating the power into the hands of a small number of men, who would devote themselves to the whole work and danger of this collective dictatorship. The circumstances were so serious that a single thought, that of the public safety, absorbed all minds, and it was with this name that the Convention baptised the committee in which its confidence placed the destinies of the country. Barere, in a most enthusiastic speech, while recounting the immense needs of the situation, showed the whole extent of the duties imposed on the new chiefs of the government.

"Liberty," he said "has become the creditor of every citizen. Some owe her their industry, others their fortune, these their advice, those their arms—all owe her their blood. So everyone in France, without distinction of sex or age, is called upon by his fatherland to defend his liberty. Every physical or moral faculty, every political or industrial ability, belongs to her, all the metals and elements must pay her tribute. Let everyone take his post in the national military movement that is about to take place. The young men will fight, the married will forge arms, transport the baggage and artillery, and prepare the food, the women will work at the soldiers' clothes, will make tents, and become nurses in the hospitals for the wounded, the children will make lint out of old linen, and the old men, again taking up

the duties they had among the ancients, will be carried into the public squares, and will encourage the spirit of the young warriors, they will propagate hatred to kings and the unity of the Republic. The houses of the nation shall be turned into barracks, the public squares into workshops, the cellars will do to prepare saltpetre; all saddle horses will be requisitioned for the cavalry, all carriage horses for the artillery; hunting-pieces, swords and pikes will be used at home. The Republic is now nothing but a huge beleaguered town; France must now be nothing but a huge camp."

To meet such a huge mass of work, and in order that their work may not be hindered by squabbles as to their powers and jurisdiction, the twelve citizens who composed the Great Committee<sup>1</sup> divided amongst themselves the different parts of the government. Each exercised the most absolute authority in his ministry; but a third of them must sign an executive document to render it legal, in accordance with the decree of institution. These signatures were exchanged between the members present in a purely formal manner. Billaud-Varennés and Collot-d'Herbois managed the correspondence with the departments and the representatives who were away on any mission in the provinces. Saint-Just had asked to see to the legislation, and Couthon shared this work with him. When Robespierre entered the committee, he was charged with preparing general questions. Later, these three members established and directed a central police office. Carnot was the War Minister; Jean Bon Saint-

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<sup>1</sup> This name, which has been ratified by history, was given to the second Committee of Public Safety, formed in July, 1793, to distinguish it from those which preceded and followed. Barère was a member of the first.

André directed the Admiralty, Prieur (from the Côte-d'Or) the manufacture of arms, Robert Lindet and the other Prieur (from the Marne) the Commissariat. Barère, who in the first Committee of Public Safety had shared the Foreign Office with Danton, continued at his post with Hérault de Séchelles; but this colleague, who was nearly always on special missions, and who was afterwards arrested, left all the work to him. The Admiralty was also confided to him during the absence of Jean Bon Saint-André, which lasted several months. At the same time he was in command of the Public Education Office, the charities, public monuments, theatres, etc. We shall have to speak presently of his military reports, which are over two hundred in number. In addition, he found time to attend the sittings of the Assembly, to speak frequently in the political campaigns, and to make several lengthy reports on foreign affairs, administration, legislation, the navy, the woods and forests, etc. His report "On the means of making the French language universal" is complementary to Grégoire's on the same subject. His report "On the means of abolishing beggary in the country" contains the account of the principles that the Committee of Public Safety had summed up in the axiom: "The unfortunate are the governors of the earth; they have the right to talk as masters to the governments who neglect them." The substitution of outdoor relief for hospitals and workhouses is the foundation of the system propounded in this report. He had also prepared several plans for institutions on behalf of foundlings and abandoned mothers, but the events of July stopped their being carried out.

Finally, it was owing to his report that the École de Mars was organised, where, under the direction of Prieur



of the Côte-d'Or, our most celebrated savants, in a few booths on the plain of Sablons, taught many patriotic young men. This school was the nucleus of our finest institutions for public education.<sup>1</sup>

Such a quantity of work did not only need that exceeding facility that no historian denies that Barère possessed, it also needed less dissipation than he is generally accredited with, or else it needed that devotion of true belief that makes a man able to silence his passions. But, supposing he was able to direct these almost herculean toils whilst leading a life of pleasure,

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<sup>1</sup> In the margin of a newspaper which accredits Robespierre with the creation of the École de Mars, Barère has written: "It was Barère who made the report and prepared the decree establishing this school. Robespierre was not even present at the Committee of Public Safety on the day that Carnot proposed the idea."

In speaking of the inner working of the Committee of Public Safety, we cannot help showing up the strange blunders of an obituary notice published by the *Times* about the time of Barère's death. We mention them because the article contains, as well, information which must have been supplied by friends of Barère. The writer, who subscribes himself "A Cosmopolite," says that he was introduced to Barère forty years before by Thomas Paine. This fact seems to point out the famous Lewis Goldsmith, author of "*Crimes of Cabinets*," who was, in fact, introduced by Paine to his former colleague, as is proved by a letter of the former which we have in our possession.

According to the English biographer, Robespierre and Carnot were members at the same time of the Committee of Public Safety and that of General Surety (which their establishment rendered impossible). Barère was only member of the former, which, he adds, did not concern itself with home affairs.

Next come some most romantic details on the life of Billaud-Varennes. The author makes him become a monk, and take the name of *Padre Varenas*, in a Jacobin convent in one of the Spanish colonies. He sends him to Mexico in 1810 to stir up revolution, and at last makes him take flight and die at New York in 1817. Such lies need no refutation. Billaud is known to have spent twenty years at Sinnamari, and then, in 1816, to have taken refuge in the Republic of Hayti, where President Pétion welcomed him warmly. There he died in 1819.

he must have been a colossal genius, greater even than Mirabeau.

The supple mind and indefatigable activity that distinguished Barère were highly appreciated by the Committee. Dr. Souberbielle, then a member of the revolutionary tribunal, has told us that one day Robespierre expressed this opinion of his colleague in his presence, in terms not devoid of spite. "Barère may have committed mistakes, but he is an honest man, who loves his country, and serves it better than anyone. As soon as work is to be done, he is ready to undertake it. He knows everything, he is acquainted with everybody, he is fit for everything."

In addition to the special business of each branch of the administration with which each member dealt in his office, there was a gathering every evening to talk over general affairs. Then it was especially that Barère was so useful in playing the part that the nature of his talents had marked out for him.

"When, after several hours of animated debate, which kept us till late at night, our tired intellects could only with difficulty recall the course of the discussion, and were about to lose sight of the principal point, Barère used to speak, and after a quick, clear, summing up he placed the question squarely before us, and we only had to say a word to solve it."

It is in these words that one of Barère's colleagues (Prieur of the Côte-d'Or) explained to me one day how precious Barère's presence was in the Committee of Public Safety.

The office of reporter was a natural consequence of the summings-up of which we have just spoken. Barère was almost always given this duty, which he carried out

with undeniable cleverness. But this is also, perhaps, the cause why he was the object of so much hatred. He was often compelled to express in the name of the committee opinions by no means his own, which he had no doubt opposed, and for which he was obliged to find apologies, hence he has often been held morally responsible for what was not his, and it has been possible to tax him with weakness by contrasting apparently contradictory opinions. No one but Barère was ever, perhaps, placed in such exacting circumstances: a more energetic character would have either declined the work or have been overcome by it.

And yet the part he played was a necessary one. If the committee of the Government had shown itself divided in the Assembly, it would have been deprived of all command: every day a like scene would have been witnessed, as when Barère having proposed in the name of a section of his colleagues the banishment of the political prisoners, of which the prisons were full, Collot-d'Herbois violently opposed him and styled him a supporter of the aristocrats. The task that Barère had set himself was a brilliant but difficult one; whilst other members of the committee, who had been able to make a speciality for themselves, found a compensation for the evil they could not prevent in the knowledge of the good they did, Barère, condemned to be a party to everything, had to present it all to the nation under favourable colours.

If, in forming a juster opinion of the duties imposed on the reporter of the committee, we do not credit him with opinions not his own, we must also deprive him of some of the merit of his labours. Pen in hand, he was present at the private debates, often rich in broad views, wise opinions and energetic statements, and by help of

his memory he reproduced the tenor of them ; so much so that one or other of his colleagues might have laid claim not only to his share of the omniscience of the reporter, but also to some of those picturesque chiselled expressions which are more abundant in the reports of the committee than in any other of Barère's works.

His war reports form the chief part. Carnot, Prieur and Lindet furnished him almost daily with the material of some speech on the successes of our arms. What they worked at in the silence of their offices, they left to their colleague the pleasure of publishing. The public and the Assembly were so accustomed to consider him a bearer of good news that his presence in the House excited an unimaginable enthusiasm ; his entrance was greeted with cheers and everybody cried, "Barère to the tribune!" The debate in hand was interrupted to listen to him. His reports, when read aloud in the camps, electrified the soldiers, and he himself relates with just pride how they have been heard to rush on the enemy with shouts of "Barère to the tribune!" Then it was that a decree of having deserved the thanks of the country was the best and most coveted reward.

Barère was in his right when he said in speaking of the revolutionary eloquence :

"It was the first time, either in France or Europe, either among ancient or modern nations, that the national tribune, devoted to legislative debates and politics, has exercised an important influence on the army, in rising to a new kind of eloquence. This is the first time that the representatives of a nation have spoken in the name of liberty and equality to numberless battalions, have celebrated the exploits and great deeds of the national

forces, and deccied rewards to its armies, that conquered so many kings.”

One may read in the Memoirs how much this Committee of Public Safety, which was obliged to fight the whole of Europe, thought, nevertheless, of the duties of peace; and one may rest convinced that, if it had enjoyed peace, many public works would not have waited until our days before being carried out. The beautifying of the Tuileries and of the Champs Elysées, the completion of the Louvre, and the housing of the National Library had seriously occupied the time of the committee. In the plan proposed by Barère, who was in charge of the public buildings, the space of the present library was to have been converted into a square ornamented with fountains in front of the Opera. Other circumstances have brought about just the contrary.

Besides, public opinion has already thought better of several errors, and even before history had begun to enlighten it, the minds of those men who are above party prejudice had formed their judgment. In a note of Barère's we find the following :

“General Subervic, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, formerly Lannes' aide-de-camp in the war in Italy, came to see me in Tarbes, where he was inspecting a regiment of cavalry. We chatted much of Bonaparte, and one thing leading to another, he told me he had heard these words from the very mouth of the General, who was talking of France with his officers, words which spoken abroad were as the judgment of posterity: ‘Since the Revolution of 1789 there has been but one real energetic government in France, which was the Committee of Public Safety.’”

The note finishes thus :

"Later, during the Empire, General Subervie heard Napoleon say, 'To write the history of the French Revolution well is very difficult. I only know one man capable of doing it well, and that is Barère. But he would have to give up certain prejudices.' Napoleon was doubtless alluding to my labours on behalf of the Republic that he had overturned. He called my love for my country and my devotion to liberty, prejudices. But he did not know, or did not wish to know, that to have any influence on the government of a great nation, one must, before all else, do all for one's country and nothing for oneself; that one must be the man of the country and of the age. To act on other principles is, in truth, to have prejudices, and Napoleon was not free from them."

Barère often thought of writing the history of the period of the Revolution. He thought out the skeleton in hundreds of ways. Sometimes he called it a "Study," or "Thoughts," or "Recollections," or "Lessons of the Revolution"; sometimes it is a "Secret History," or simply a "Political Diary," some "Chapters taken from the Great Work of the Revolution," or a "Picture of Paris and the Provinces" during this astounding period; or, lastly, an account merely of the "Men," the "Periods," and the "Great Days."

He proposed to collect his military reports to the Convention. With the explanatory notes that he would have added we should have possessed an invaluable history of the wars of the Republic, written in the style of the time.

Lastly, he had the idea, of which he has left some sketches, of describing "The Mysterious Personages of the Revolution." This title was very promising. In times

of political disorder there are indeed a certain number of characters dragged off so quickly by the storm that they stand out for too brief an instant before the historian to allow him to seize their features: more often than not they only show him one side of their character. Other actors in revolutions have a part so contrary to their nature imposed on them that reason refuses to judge them, and passion makes monsters of them. Yet when a corner of the veil that envelops them is raised, they are proved to be most sensitively human. It is the duty of their surviving contemporaries to fill up these historical *lacunæ*.

We have not mentioned half the plans Barère conceived and sometimes sketched out. The quantity of them is a proof of the different points of view from which he looked on facts.

But what we ought chiefly to regret, for he alone perhaps could have done it well, is the incomplete "History of the Committee of Public Safety." We may perhaps publish this work separately, in the meantime we shall not be blamed for giving a few extracts from it, which will show the author's plan and manner.

### PRELIMINARY IDEA.

THE National Convention had at first, from the 22nd of September, 1792, a Committee of General Defence, composed of twenty-five members, and all the Convention might be present at its debates. The northern frontiers were threatened, the King of Prussia was already occupying the eastern fortresses, Longwy and Verdun, and was advancing into Champagne. Every day this committee was occupied with measures for defending the territory of France; but it was by no means capable of dealing

with its difficult and honourable mission. Unexpected events, and the heroic courage, of the volunteers, who had rushed from every department, did more than the Committee of General Defence, composed of party politicians exasperated by hate and ambition, and so divided that only unforeseen events could save the nation and its liberty.

The principal incident was the treason of General Dumouriez, who, after the disaster of Neerwinden, thought that, with the help of the remains of the army he commanded, he could march on Lille and then on Paris, and seize the power in order to establish a monarchy. This shameful betrayal, the odium of which fell equally on both parties in the Committee of General Defence, as each side was accused of sharing the profit, led to the abolition of this committee. The Convention replaced it by a Committee of Public Safety of nine members of its own choosing.

#### FIRST COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY.

It was established on the 5th of April, 1793. It was at first occupied with the means of defence and the providing of armies when all the frontiers were invaded, when internal dissensions began to stir up the south, and civil war was being organised in the west. But the two parties in the National Convention spent every day in abusing and attacking each other, instead of saving their country. The ambition of the municipality of Paris, who thought itself the sole founder of the Republic by virtue of the events of the 10th of August, brought in armed forces into the midst of these stormy debates. By bringing up forty-two guns with lighted fuses the municipality exacted the violation of the national



representation, by commanding the Assembly to arrest twenty-two members, whom it styled Girondists and Federalists. The Committee of Public Safety, taken thus unawares by this conspiracy of the municipality of Paris, could offer no show of resistance, nor deliver the Assembly ; so the national representation was violated by a military surprise. The Convention felt the need of forming another Committee of Public Safety composed of more energetic men, capable of using means to make the national authority respected by all the factions and parties who were already fighting for the rags of the infant Republic.

#### SECOND COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY.

It was at the beginning of July, 1793, that the second Committee of Public Safety was nominated by the Convention. It was to consist of twelve members, but only nine were chosen at first ; the three other places were filled up in August and October. It started on its duties at the moment when forty-three departments had been estranged by emissaries of the faction that had been beaten on the 31st of May and by deputies that had taken refuge in the west and south ; at the moment when federalism was raising its standard against the National Convention ; when the English and Spaniards were buying the surrender of Toulon, and were seizing the arsenals and fleet there. This committee, far from recoiling before dangers so imminent, hastened to take up this immense responsibility, to save national unity, to preserve the integrity of France, and keep hold of the liberty it had won.

I shall always be proud of having been a member of this committee from July, 1793, till October, 1794, and

to have been its mouthpiece and reporter to the Assembly, and even to have been its victim. I am writing of the labours, debates and public characters of the men who made up this second Committee of Public Safety, whose principal events and mighty recollections I am tracing. Two generations have already passed over the tombs of the members of the Convention; I am the only one left of the Committee of Public Safety. Alone have I survived long years of proscription and exile, as if I were destined to dissolve the prejudices that remain against my contemporaries and to publish to the new generation, so intelligent and so friendly to justice, the truth about the opinions, labours and services of this committee, so slandered and still more misunderstood. Now that the actors have left the stage and the conquerors and conquered rest for ever on this vast battle-field, truth and justice, who never rest but on tombs, can at least make their powerful voices heard.

I shall not say anything of all that the *Moniteur* and the newspapers reported of what was said or done in the national tribune—those are official acts, public documents; but I shall speak of what happened at debates, of the proposals brought forward by the authorities of that time, either among the members of the Convention or the members of the committee. It is the interior working of the committee which is not known. There are mysteries of extraordinary power that ought to be known, either to prepare for the future by the experience of the past, or to submit to the supreme judgment of human opinion both men and facts, either misunderstood or not known at all, or slandered by foreigners or distorted by party spirit. To relate sincerely the facts as they happened is to restore honesty to historians and

hour of danger men save their country as quickly and in what manner they are able. France made its noble, enormous effort in 1793."

Frenchmen have needed thirty years to understand this historic truth, although they were eye-witnesses of it. What abuse and libel the political writers and orators have poured on this solemn period when France and Liberty were saved!

I am undertaking the composition of Memoirs to assist the labours of historians of this formidable committee, which preserved the national independence and the liberty and territory of France. Whatever may be the excitement of parties, the strength of prejudices, the injustice of men and the ingratitude of reactions, it will be of no use for historians to write in favour of this difference of opinion; they will not prevent the Committee of Public Safety from occupying an important place in the annals of France, in the history of Europe, and in the account of its social regeneration. Who would have had the means of suddenly and energetically defending and saving the country at this dangerous moment, when the fate of France still hung in the balance and its existence as a nation was still so problematic, if there had not existed a political legislative gathering, numerous and disinterested, devoted and huge in its enterprises and courage, in the midst of a nation but yet uninstructed as to its rights? The National Convention, with its Committee of Public Safety, was the only body able to oppose the whole of Europe, and to resist the armed alliance of all the oligarchies and monarchies subsidised by the Tory English Government. It was the Committee of Public Safety that created fourteen armies, organised them and gave them plans of campaign which,

when heroically carried out, foiled the plots of Pilsnitz and baffled the bribery of St James' It was the Committee of Public Safety that started the factories of rifles, of gunpowder and saltpetre, of cannon and of all the necessities for keeping and transporting a million of men It was the committee that prepared and founded so many noble institutions, such as the Ecole de Mars, the abolition of beggary, the organisation of public works a vast scheme of canals, a normal school and a series of public monuments, to be re-established, preserved or started

It preserved all the statues, columns, and other artistic remains that were to be found on the property of the emigrant nobles or of the religious orders, it was on the side of all men of light and leading in opposing the mutilation of monuments and the destruction of bindings and books in the public libraries It could not prevent the violent acts of popular meetings which, having no artistic feeling, only saw in these objects the symbols of slavery and despotism The only thing that can be imputed to it was the displacement of the royal tombs at St Denis This was a decree of the Convention which was passed as a mark of hatred against royalty, in order to destroy the superstitious traditions still clinging to it, but the committee itself founded a museum at the Petits Augustins wherein to preserve these tombs as artistic monuments and pages of our monumental history

The committee had had the idea of opening up communicating canals between all the large rivers that would have been rendered navigable by destroying all dams and other obstacles It commanded the Minister of the Interior to get the plan examined by the Council of the Woods and Forests and by other civil and

military engineers. All were in favour of this splendid plan that would increase the means of internal communication a hundredfold. A large map of this scheme of canals was drawn up and handed over to the Ministry of Public Works and Education, presided over by M. Barère, who had been specially ordered to see to the execution of the plan. But at the time of the Revolution of Thermidor some of the offices of the committee were plundered; the representatives who had been sent on missions to the departments hastened to bear off the portfolios containing their compromising correspondence. Documents were given over to a kind of official plundering under the committee of 1795, and the map disappeared. The trace of the works ordered for the great plan of canalisation alone remained. The new committee, seeking to obtain popularity by using the plans and labours of its predecessor, wrote officially to M. Barère, who was then confined in the Castle of Oleron, to ask him for an account of this map which had been deposited at his office. He answered that his office had been ransacked of its papers, books, money and furniture on the 13th of Germinal, by the order of the new Committee of General Safety; that everything was sealed up in his rooms at M. Savalette's, one of the commissioners of the Public Exchequer. This reply caused them to break the seals in M. Barère's rooms, and the Committee of General Safety took possession of everything, by the old law of disinheritance no doubt, or by the new one of "Might is right." But the map of the canals was not found, because it was still at the office of the committee that had had it drawn up. However, it was probably not lost, for a member of the Convention, M. Maragon of the Aude,

who had been for some time employed on the Languedoc Canal, made a great report to the Conseil des Anciens in 1797, on the necessity and means of opening up water communication over the whole of France. M. Barre recognised in this the analysis of the works prepared under the direction of the Woods and Forests, during the time of the Committee of Public Safety.

15th of May, 1793 — The excesses of the demagogue Marat, the secret ambition of the municipality of Paris, which took all the credit to itself of the victory of the 10th of August, the underhand intrigues of the leaders of this municipality, and the plans of Federalism carried out in the southern departments, preceded the arrival of an envoy from the English Government in Paris. He introduced himself to the Foreign Minister, and showed him his letters of credit, and his authority for making proposals for a general peace. The minister having informed the Committee of Public Safety of his arrival, it nominated five of its members to listen to the proposals of this envoy, although such a mission excited much distrust at a period when France was in such straits, both in the interior, at Paris, and on the frontiers. The five commissioners were Treilhard, Cambon, Lindet, Barre and Guyton Morveau. On the next day, the 16th of May, Mr William Pitt's envoy came to the committee-room, where he found the five members of the committee and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He affected an air of great satisfaction and even presumption, his language was cautious, and at first he only expressed himself in general terms on the necessity of peace for all the European Powers, and for France most of all, against whom they were all arrayed.

But Cambon, getting impatient, asked him to explain

the proposals of his Government clearly. The English envoy then declared that France should revoke certain ultra-radical reforms that the first National Assembly had voted, and should place herself again under her fundamental laws. This emphatic, assertive tone displeased them so much that Treillard told him to state clearly the proposals of the British Government. Treillard's tone was so decided that the envoy drew a diplomatic note from his portfolio, the reading of which shocked them even more than his preamble. The proposals he read were as follow :

1. That the old States-General were to be recognised, and that they should vote by houses.

2. That the clergy and nobility should possess their former privileges, and the Third Estate its former rank and name.

3. That the Parliaments were to be re-established.

"All that you propose is impossible; the only shred of these old institutions that exists," cried Lindet, "is the hatred the nation bears them." "The Parliaments are abolished; they will never return," added Guyton-Morveau.

The British envoy went on reading :

4. That the form of a republican government, as yet neither constituted nor organised, should be done away with.

At this all the members of the committee insisted that the conference should cease, the English proposals being an insult to the National Convention and to the French people.

"You do not reckon on having to deal with the Republic," says Barère, "since Mr. Pitt asks for the form of government to be changed. This insolent contradiction in your proposals proves that you and your master are dissimulating. Explain your meaning."

Then the English envoy declares that it is thoroughly understood that, as the basis of peace, France should be in harmony with the form of the majority of European governments, who have formed the coalition to obtain this prime result—the unity of the monarchical principle.

Cambon immediately seizes the diplomatic note with impetuous indignation, and tells the English envoy that the commissioners will make their report to the Committee of Public Safety, and that the Foreign Minister will acquaint him with their decision. Thus finished the insolent message of Pitt's emissary.

On the next day the result of the conference and the diplomatic note were submitted to the meeting of all the members of the Committee of Public Safety. General indignation prevailed; the English envoy was regarded either as the visible sign of some plot being hatched in the provinces, or simply as a spy sent under the pretence of diplomaey to sound public opinion in Paris and the National Convention.

The Committee of Public Safety, having conferred together with the Foreign Minister, bade him expressly convey to this envoy of Mr. Pitt the intimation that he must leave France within two days. But, as at the end of this time he was still in Paris, the minister was summoned and made personally responsible that he should leave immediately; and so France rid herself of him. He had to be conducted to Calais and put on board. This diplomatic spy had only been sent to get a closer view of the state of France, the character and political significance of the National Convention, and its Committee of Public Safety.

*The Question of the Secret Service Money.*—The secret service money appeared to Danton a means to be employed



against the Committee of Public Safety, whose severe honesty was incontestable.

Either Danton reckoned, in his customary way, on filching funds for his bribery and revolutionary ambition through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to which he had managed to get one of his sworn friends (M. Desforgues) appointed, or he reckoned one day to accuse the Committee of Public Safety of extravagance, and of employing, etc., on the score of this secret service money, the funds entrusted to it in an improper manner. Danton seized the moment when no member of the committee was present in the Convention to bring forward, in his stentorian voice, an urgent motion to grant it fifty millions of secret service money, either to obtain reliable information abroad or to influence the provinces, and especially to lessen the number of the leaders and agitators in La Vendée. Danton explained, in order to smother opposition, if any should appear, how very necessary this secret expenditure, uncontrolled, uncensured, was to the policy of the Government.

The motion was carried unanimously, so great was the confidence of the National Convention in the progress of the Committee of Public Safety, which had deserved its confidence by success and unremitting toil, although these had been won and performed without any secret funds or extraordinary occult expenditure. An usher from the Convention brought the decree as to this secret service grant to the committee at three o'clock in the afternoon, while it was debating on the foreign and civil wars. All the members were astonished at receiving such a message; they indignantly protested against the proposer of such an important and delicate a motion as the secret expenditure of national money. Carnot made it clear that there

must be some other motive in this demand for secret funds, so huge and useless, and so little in accordance with the progress and policy of the government of the National Convention. Other members observed that, on such a motion, the committee that had asked for nothing ought at least to have been heard on the need or advisability of this strange, huge vote. But, in order not to recriminate the very susceptible mover of the proposal, nor to give any opportunity of a collision in the Assembly, the committee unanimously resolved that the decree granting the fifty millions of secret service money should be placed in the pigeon holes for official documents in the Council Hall, and should be disregarded, that not a copper of these fifty millions should be taken or used, and that after the country had been delivered from foes abroad and in La Vendee, that the decree and the money should be publicly returned intact to the National Convention by the reporter of the committee, with the declaration that they had to fight enemies, not to corrupt men.

This was done in 1794 after the great victories of the time. Barère, the reporter of the committee, was charged with the carrying out of this restitution of the decree, and the grant of the untouched secret service money at a full meeting of the House. His speech was enthusiastically received. *Then honesty was in fashion*

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The Convention proclaimed a democratic constitution, approved by the first Assemblies. But being flung as it was in the midst of such a frightful storm, being compelled to quench civil war in the west and south with one hand, while with the other it was sustaining the brunt of a combined attack from all the armies of Europe, the

Convention was not hypocritical enough, like other governments, to talk of constitutions and laws at the very moment it was breaking them. It felt the need of having exceptional powers during war at home and abroad ; it solemnly proclaimed that constitutional laws should be suspended until universal peace had been obtained by victory. It said boldly, as the consuls used to say to the Romans, "Let the safety of the people be the first law." France was warned of the political and military situation, and knew a revolutionary war was rendered necessary by circumstances.

The Convention did not usurp all its powers ; it received them by the votes of the nation. It was not simply a meeting of legislators ; what good would ordinary laws have been against the invasion of the whole of Europe ? The accumulation of power was as terrible as the circumstances that produced it ; it was the despotism of liberty, a despotism that has its fury, fanaticism, excesses, mistakes and victims, like any other. But, at any rate, this despotism was not an hereditary scourge like monarchy. It was fated to strike terror into the enemies of France. The Convention, at its first meeting, unanimously proclaimed the republican form of government, and inspired kings, oligarchies and emigrant nobles with a kind of torpor that enabled it to prepare the means of defence, which had been very inadequate up till then.

The excesses of the Revolution were the work of its opponents, who placed it in the position of either conquering or being annihilated. The faults of the oppressed are really those of the oppressors, and a man is guilty of those excesses that he purposely provokes.

Originally the Convention only wished to establish

'democratic liberty by means of representative institutions, to found equality by laws and customs, to uproot all ancient aristocracy, and to resist the ambitions of new aristocracy. Abroad the Convention never wished to conquer or invade other territories, except to defend itself. Foreign princes and their accomplices in France compelled the Convention to struggle against their combined attacks as a band of hunters track lions to their dens, they must attack to defend themselves conquer in self preservation, and inspire fear to render their existence secure.

No doubt moderation, justice and law are the true safeguards of society. But before this law and order can exist, the territory of a nation must be undivided, its frontiers unattacked and its nationality uncontested.

"The indivisibility of our territory for us is the first of all questions," cried the *Gazette de France*, in declaring that on the day that the national territory was violated it would call all its friends to arms, being sure that the dismemberment of the country would then be a possibility. And what did the Convention do but to place the safety of France and its integrity first and foremost, by means of the fourteen armies of the Republic? In 1793 the dismemberment of France was a much more likely event. Are not the conditions of the division contained in the congress of Pilnitz and the treaty of Pavia?

I had before my very eyes in March, 1794, the original of the partition treaty drawn up at Pilnitz, and signed by several of the allied monarchs, as well as a coloured map of France so divided. The nineteenth century will judge if the fears of the eighteenth century were justified.

A time will come when the public and private virtues of nearly all the members of the Convention, their unassailable uprightness, and their beautiful devotion to their country will be appreciated at their true worth. Generations follow one another, and very fortunately, do not resemble one another; thus does nature correct her mistakes and nullify her calamities. France will one day pay its great debt to the Convention for having devoted itself body and soul to freeing the nation. In the nineteenth century the Convention will be thanked by public opinion for having founded that unity of the French nation which will never allow a despotism to efface it, as heroic Poland was effaced by Russian autocracy. The children of France will be grateful to those who saved them from the yoke of the oppressor. At the resounding voice of the Convention, a million citizen soldiers rose up to drive the invading hordes back across our frontiers; France will then recognise the right of such an Assembly to the prefix *National*.

The members of this body did much but said little; they were under arms and could not at the same time conquer Europe and write books justifying their heroism. The enemies of the Revolution have taken advantage of this silence to overwhelm them with ingratitude, abuse and proscription; and the people who never judge for themselves have submitted to the influence of these anti-revolutionary writers. When the courage and devotion of the Convention were no longer required, when all the profit had been gleaned from their gigantic labours and rich political inheritance, they were given over to vindictive judgment. Under the Empire and Restoration their enemies alone had the right to write the history and portraits of the members; biographies were paid for

by those in power with the sole aim of running down the Assembly that had established democratic liberty

Some writers, during the period of reaction from 1795 to 1832, have accused the Convention of having imitated and travestied the republics of Greece and Rome, as if the Convention did not know that nothing in the world was less Spartan than the Parisians, less Roman than the French. These hired scribblers would have been correct if they had said that the Convention did not wish to imitate the aristocratic institutions of England, or the federal constitution of the twenty five united states of America. Its members were lovers of unity, because it led to a compact nation and an entirely national army, and one capable of repulsing the invader. They were opposed to federation, because they did not wish to weaken the nation, attacked as it was on every frontier and in half the departments. They acted according to the needs of the times to preserve the integrity and independence of the nation. That was the only question in 1793 and 1794. It was the question of existence which depended on the chance of battles. There was hence no question of copying the ancient republics, who had virtues we have not. Imitations are the work of presuming mediocrity. The disguise of English institutions, that the orators and law makers talk of, are a fraud and deception. The Convention only imitated the disinterestedness and courage of the republics of old which among the French are the virtues of dupes.

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Although disinterestedness and honesty have become, in this over-civilised nineteenth century, useless virtues, at which the moneyed and influential jeer, one must yet name, for the sole benefit of posterity, one point of

stoic moral courage displayed by two members of the Committee of Public Safety, two enlightened soldiers, whose influence on the destinies of the freedom of France was great. These two citizens were Carnot and Prieur, both natives of the same town of Dijon,<sup>1</sup> both engineer officers of the same rank. These men held the greatest administrative and executive power that kings and ministers have ever had; they appointed and promoted nearly every soldier who distinguished himself in battle for forty years. There was not one of these soldiers, who afterwards became generals, marshals, dukes, and even kings, but whose first commission was signed "Carnot," "C. A. Prieur." Well, these ministers who were so powerful, and who created so many military reputations, each kept to his modest rank. All the time that they were in power they never even used the right that their seniority gave them. These two men may well be called antique heroes.

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"Some great events never repeat themselves, at any rate in the same manner," said Barère one day while chatting with M. David, who quotes his own words to me: "I should like to see a picture representing the little room where the Committee of Public Safety used to meet. There nine members worked day and night, without a president, round a table with a green tablecloth, while the walls were of the same color as our. Often, after a few minutes' sleep snatched I would find a heap of papers in my place; they were the reports of our armies. After reading them I drew up a report

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<sup>1</sup> Barère is here in error. Both were Burgundians; but Prieur was born at Auxonne and Carnot at Nolay.

that I used to read immediately from the tribune in the Convention. Our soldiers, with their woollen epaulettes, fought the enemies of France, and when one of them did anything brilliant, they gave him a piece of paper on which was written the resolution of the Assembly that he had deserved well of his country.

"The Committee of Public Safety was the sublimest creation of the Revolution. This band of specialists was the only way to make France victorious, and it would have succeeded in fixing the Republic on a firm basis and in freeing Europe, if Robespierre had not interfered, with his insatiable ambition and his offended vanity, to thwart our work. I said just now that great events do not repeat themselves. So France will never have to fight the whole of Europe again, and the Reign of Terror will no more return than will exclusive despotism. Visconti once said to me 'What the men of your age have done beats the deeds of the ancients. Demosthenes in his speeches struggled to make his fellow-countrymen repulse the seductive offers of Philip, Cicero fought against Catiline, but you fought civil war and a whole Europe in arms.' No doubt when all the material we left has been put in order, we shall appear giants."

The Committee of Public Safety went to work with a will. It was re-elected month by month by the Convention, and justified this extension of power by its success, when, as Barere says, in the interview we have just quoted, Robespierre came and thwarted their work. In combination with his two friends, Couthon and Saint Just, he tried to be the centre of the executive power. The office for supervising the government officials, that Saint Just had started in a modest way, was transformed



into a central police office by successive encroachments. The members of the triumvirate controlled it in turn, and their colleagues were hardly aware of their proceedings.

"He had such a good opinion of his personal influence," says Barère, in his manuscript notes, speaking of Robespierre, "that he laid claim to power he did not possess, that of sending agents into certain departments. He sent some to the Gironde and the Haute-Garonne to keep an eye on the members on missions, and he even arrested those that these agents considered suspicious, and denounced to the revolutionary committees. M. Jullien was sent in this way to Bordeaux, where he kept watch on the doings of Tallien and Isabeau, with advantage to the public weal. Madame Taschereau, too, was sent to Toulouse, where she caused a great number to be put in prison, until the representative Paganel forced this woman to say by whose authority she did these things. She said she was on a special mission, and showed Robespierre's full authority. Then she commanded Paganel to act in concert with her. But the representative only replied to this strange order by bidding the local authorities to lead this woman forcibly out of the department. And then he set to work to free a number of persons unjustly imprisoned."

The triumvirate endeavoured to get possession of the whole power of the committee by encroaching on the special duties of those members that it could not gain over to its side. They wished to deprive Barère of the direction of the military reports and give them to the incompetent Couthon, but he gave way beneath the burden. Saint-Just tried to oust Carnot from the War Office, but was equally unsuccessful. As for Robespierre, he pre-

tended to look after things in general, perhaps to conceal his lack of business talent, and he was generally considered to have the same influence in the committee as he had in the Convention, thanks to the clubs, whilst in reality round that table, where men were measured by their worth, his domineering spirit met with stout resistance. He profited by his colleagues' cares of office to which they were entirely devoted, to force his tactics in the party warfare of the time on them.

No doubt Robespierre was inspired with the wish to become dictator by no vulgar ambition, no mere lust of power. He thought that, as dictator, he could destroy the obstacles which stood in the way of the permanent establishment of the Republic. His pride also urged him to it, because he thought himself more capable than any other to carry out such an undertaking.

This last opinion of his has been favoured more of late than among his contemporaries. The Apologia of this man has been carried to the point of excommunicating all who opposed him.

Likewise the belief in the necessity of a dictator has increased among writers who judge the events at a distance. It was not so in Robespierre's time. Why a dictator? asked the republicans. To protect us against our foes? But our armies are victorious. Against the ambition of our generals? But there is not one who resists the orders of the all-powerful committee. But the factions at home! that was the chief cry. The partisans of a dictatorship concerned themselves more with the interior than with the exterior, to use a newly-coined phrase. But their opponents answered again. The army is devoted to the Republic—nothing to fear on that score. The royalists are crushed—perhaps even they have felt the strong

arm too heavily. As for the few unworthy ones who disgrace the best cause, public opinion will always support their punishment. Let those proconsuls who set a bad example be recalled, the immense influence of the Committee of Public Safety will enable you to do it, as it has done before ; let these men be cast from public life. But if you wish to have another 31st of May, a 16th of Germinal, to start the national representation all over again, you will open a gulf in which all the defenders of liberty will be swallowed up one after the other, you will violate a principle which, if preserved, would shield the Republic.

However, Robespierre, who had crushed the Girondins, who had crushed Danton, wished to crush all his rivals. He seemed to know of no other means of establishing his power than the extermination of all powerful men. Napoleon, greatly his superior, could do without such expedients. But the ambitious know each other instinctively, and Napoleon did not hate Robespierre as his memory generally is hated. Let us listen to what Barère says :

“Napoleon, whom Madame de Staël, with the vain hatred of an intriguing foreigner, called a *Robespierre on horseback*, was in fact rather inclined to praise *Robespierre on foot*, because he thought he had views similar to his own, views of stopping the Revolution and creating a dictatorship in its place. Napoleon, who from time to time, in the midst of his glory and power, thought of Robespierre and his sad end, one day asked his Lord Chancellor as to the sad events of the 9th of Thermidor. ‘It was a case judged before it was heard,’ replied Cambacérès, with the acuteness of a legal courtier.”

Barère, in his Memoirs, thinks he supplies this case

with an important piece of evidence when he quotes the letter, unknown till then, that Benjamin Vaughan wrote to Robespierre, a letter that the Committee of Public Safety seized on the 9th of Thermidor. This English man, whom the committee thought dangerous enough to expel from France, told Robespierre personally of a plan of foreign policy which would have involved the reduction of France to her former boundaries under the Bourbons, and which would have helped the conquered provinces to form a federal state. Barère supposes that Mr Vaughan, a member of the House of Commons, was an emissary chosen from the ranks of the opposition to lull all suspicion, and that Robespierre had lent an ear to his proposals in the hope of supporting his plans of usurpation by external influence. Secret relations between a member of the French government and a foreigner suspected by that government were sufficient to constitute a grave accusation—but does not the letter in question, up till now taken by itself, simply come from a man who throws his ideas broadcast? If this version is the true one, it is not surprising that the plan maker, in preference, should write to Robespierre, whom rumour accredited with the chief authority. The newspapers, and even the foreign ambassadors, talked of the French armies as “Robespierre’s soldiers,” and the London pamphlets called him ‘Maximilian I, King of France and Navarre,’ either because they really considered him dictator, or to excite general distrust against him, or, in short, from hateful denision of France.

The document quoted by Barère does not, therefore, throw new light on the means that Robespierre reckoned on using to establish his dictatorship firmly. The fact that he wished to create this dictatorship for his own

profit alone remains submitted to the judgment of history until fresh proofs supervene.

Let us now cast a rapid glance on the events, and especially on Baière's conduct.

The two camps were in view of one another. Robespierre having left the committee, not liking to measure himself with the enemy at close quarters, had taken refuge in the clubs, whence he launched his incendiary bombs. He did not dare to make a decisive attack, either from irresolution or, as he said sometimes, because he shrank from striking men necessary to the government, who were situated between himself and his personal enemies, so he had to fight two kinds of opponents.

The former represented the remains of all the conquered parties, stirred by revenge; behind them, monarchy and foreign rule were hidden with their aggressive agents. These were always weaving continual plots.

The others, animated by a spirit of moderation, but rejecting a dictatorship, had behind them all those who, wearied by an intolerable tension of revolution, asked to be allowed at last to enjoy the liberty they had bought so dearly. They hesitated between the desire of satisfying legitimate needs and the fear of producing one of those schisms, which destroy power and open the way to reaction. If they consented to shield some men, it was certainly not because they approved of their conduct; but the violation of the national representation appeared to them the greatest danger of all for the Republic. Robespierre himself, except for his threatening innovations, would have found protection in their eyes out of respect for this principle. In fine, nothing was more uncertain than the success of a premature attack, which, if it failed in the Convention, would have been turned to profit by their

adversary, and have assured the triumph of his ambitious plans

We reckon Barre among the men of whom we have been talking for he was a sincere republican and had no vengeance to carry out, besides, the natural gentleness of his character would have prevented him doing so. Did he act the trimmer between the two sides as has been declared? It has even been bruited that he had prepared two entirely opposite speeches at the moment of the crisis, in order to be ready for either result. We can only accept this tradition as a symbol of the part Barre is supposed to have played, as to the fact, it appears false in material points. The most probable version is the one Legendre gave during the sitting of the 9th of Prairial. "I remarked that Barre changed his speech according to the manner it was received by the Assembly

Barre was always opposed to the idea of a dictatorship, he had resisted Saint Just's motion on behalf of Robespierre, which was brought forward in the committee and defeated on the order of the day. He did not hesitate then between two opinions, but he hesitated, like others, to begin the struggle for motives we have just explained. "National Assemblies immortalise themselves when they write out the first declaration of rights, but they are ruined when they first bring an action against one of the representatives, Barre has said. Besides, he hesitated no more than others did, because his natural timidity urged him to be on good terms with everyone, and if later he was aggressive, perhaps it was the fear of danger that drove him to it, he was like a stag turning on the huntsmen

Since the time that Robespierre and his friends had

seemed the most unlikely of all the actors of the 9th of Thermidor to do so. As for Barère, his appreciation of the man seemed to grow more and more favourable with time.

In 1795 or 1796, in a huge manuscript book, full of reviews and reflections, in alphabetical order, which he called, for no perceivable reason, *Vocabulaire littéral*, he wrote :

“What a tyrant! without genius, without courage, without military talent, without political experience, without true eloquence, without esteem for his colleagues, without confidence in any enlightened citizen, without kindness for the unfortunate or regard for the power of the nation.”

His Memoirs tell us what he thought of him twenty years later.

Here is the picture he draws :

“Robespierre had a face wondrous pale and pock-fretten ; the same mind that hollowed his cheeks with a sardonic, and occasionally savage, smile agitated his lips convulsively and lit up his eyes with hidden fire and a sombre, piercing look. His speeches were always prepared ; his proposals appeared studied and sometimes enigmatic, obscure, and tiresome, full of political threats and distrust. His soul was of a strong, chilly nature ; his temper was tenacious and obstinate ; his voice was deep and occasionally terrifying ; his dress was very neat, in spite of the habits and customs of the time, but his gesticulations were rough and somewhat wild ; his distrust of all the celebrated patriots, as well as of those who were only hypocrites, he expressed undisguisedly in his conversation and speeches ; his peculiar characteristic was the pride he had in his popularity. Among true, en-

lightened and humane patriots Robespierre would have rendered great services to the cause of liberty, but he found around him none but men with exaggerated revolutionary ideas, who, having been educated among the lower classes of society, gave him neither wise views nor good advice. His fear and their flattery created for him a kind of guard composed of none but extreme revolutionary, myrmidons.

In the notes composed for his own biography after 1830, Barère writes thus

"Robespierre was always a republican, even in the days of the National Assembly which created the constitutional monarchy. During the Convention he continually upheld the cause of liberty and the rights of the nation. But his great popularity was mingled with a suspicious, wild and exclusive appearance. He was unmoved by riches, but, as every man is ambitious, he could not more freely after the death of Danton. After the month of March, 1794, Robespierre's conduct appeared to me to change. Saint Just was to a great degree the cause of this, and this leader was too youthful, he urged him into the vain and dangerous path of dictatorship which he haughtily proclaimed. From that time all confidences in the two committees were at an end and the misfortunes that followed the division in the government became inevitable.

In 1832, during Barère's stay in Paris on his return from his exile, M. David went to see him and found him ailing. Violent asthma compelled him to keep his bed, which he called "living horizontally." They talked of Robespierre. "He was a disinterested man and a republican at heart," said Barère, "it was unfortunate that he wanted to be a dictator. He thought it was the



only way of repressing the overflow of evil passions. He often spoke of it to us who had to do with the armies. We did not hide from him that Saint-Just, who was formed of more dictatorial stuff, would have ended by overturning him and occupying his place; we knew too that he would have us guillotined because of our opposition to his plans; so we overthrew him. I have reflected about this man since, and I see that his dominant idea was the establishment of a republican government, and that in fact he pursued men whose opposition impeded the progress of this government. It was lucky that there was at that time in the Chamber of Deputies one who denounced those who were conspiring against liberty. We were then on the battlefield; we never understood this man. He was of a nervous, bilious temperament; he had a contraction in his mouth; he had the temperament of great men, and posterity will call him great."

At the question, "How is the pension that Robespierre's sister received from Louis XVIII. to be explained?" he made an angry movement and exclaimed disdainfully: "Louis XVIII. was the greatest knave that ever lived. He was not able to tarnish this man's reputation in his lifetime, so he tried to do so after his death. This is the explanation of the pension which has caused so much talk."

M. David having spoken of his plan of making statues of the most famous statesmen of the Revolution, and having mentioned Danton's name, Barère sat up quickly and cried imperiously: "Do not forget Robespierre! He was a genuine, honest man, a true republican. His vanity, his irascible susceptibility and his unreasoning distrust of his colleagues caused his downfall. It was

a great misfortune !' Then his head dropped on his chest again, and he remained for a long time wrapped up in his thoughts

History will not fail to collect these important statements But, also, in the interests of history, I ought to say that another contemporary, Carnot, never modified his severe judgment of Robespierre He considered him a very average man, and his ambition for supreme power seemed to be based on little and to be dangerous for the country This opinion he did not fear to sum up one day, in the very presence of the triumvirs themselves, in these words "You are ridiculous dictators !"

Whatever may be the final judgment of history on the events we have just mentioned, everyone must regret their consequences "Then," said Barre, "began that reaction which is not yet exhausted by the Consulate, the Empire, the two Restorations and the useless consequences of the Revolution of July, a reaction that has had its excesses, its Reign of Terror, and its bloody human sacrifices, as the Revolution that preceded it but without making France free as its forerunner did This reaction, which is still continuing in 1833, can only end with time and by the unforeseen events it brings.

To this reactionary spirit we must also attribute the extreme embarrassment which every honest man feels when he studies the French Revolution The earliest histories were written with pens steeped in the bloody mire of this disastrous time, and one could never count how many lies have been told of the men and events Unhappily these earliest histories nearly always form the basis of succeeding ones, rarely does a writer overcome his natural laziness that prevents him referring to original sources, and even if he did, where are these

originals to be found? How many have been destroyed by men who feared them, and who were masters of the situation for so long? They are satisfied with first judgments, only recollecting their proximity to the events, without thinking of the passions that have distorted or blinded them. Would a serious, patient, just mind be successful in cleansing this dunghill, in seizing the thread of truth in this foetid, deceptive labyrinth?

After the 9th of Thermidor Barère frankly entered upon less violent ways, which were more suited to his personal feelings. But this did not prevent him being attacked by the reactionaries.

The deputies who dared to stand on their principles and sit on the Left needed great courage, for the Assembly was soon led by men who, after having been the foremost agents of the Reign of Terror, strained every nerve to get up a reactionary terror, as if that was their natural element.

The first denunciatory attempt against several members of the committees was unsuccessful. It was started by Lecointre of Versailles, instigated by the reactionaries. It was declared libellous, and the Convention asserted that the committees deserved the thanks of the country.

"But," said Barère, "in France one has only to persevere in even the greatest injustice to be successful at last. Fréron and Tallien, who were corrupting public opinion in their papers every morning, kept stirring up Lecointre, and made him present his printed attack anew. This time the advice of Sieyès, who was secretly leading the reaction, succeeded in getting the attack referred to a committee of twenty-one members, who were chosen from the anti-revolutionists, among the personal enemies of the accused. All the same, Barère was acquitted by nineteen out of

twenty-one votes. Sieyès again succeeded in getting this decree annulled, so that a ballot might be taken as to the accused as a whole, and Barère was included in a collective accusation.

The acquittal that Barère personally had obtained was not founded, doubtless, on the assumption that he was ignorant of the crimes with which Billaud Varennes and Collot-d'Herbois were accused, but because the latter had not known how to make friends for themselves by their character. So they endeavoured to try the cases separately, and they sounded Barère on the subject of giving evidence against his colleagues, promising him an acquittal in return, but this offer he indignantly refused.

If Barère had not been the victim of ingratitude on the part of those whom he had served when in power, if the writers of those grateful letters which we found among his papers had dared to raise their voices, their powerful evidence would have prevented his condemnation. One of the seventy-three signatories of the protest against the 31st of May, Philippe Delleville, a good man, who understood that the victims of the Terror ought not to begin terrorising its authors, and who proposed the abolition of the guillotine on his re-election to the Convention, generously came forward and declared that Barère had saved his life. He had done the same for one of his colleagues on the 9th of Thermidor. "Do not come to the House to-day," he had said to David the painter, fearing lest he should keep his promise of sticking to Robespierre to the last, "you are no politician and will compromise yourself."

David used to like to tell this anecdote at Brussels. Contrary political opinions to his own were by no means a bar to his interest, and among the letters we were just

speaking of, some contain political opinions whose frankness is as creditable to the recipient as to the senders.

The following fragment of a letter sent by Barère to his brother will show what his feelings were in the midst of such perilous circumstances :

Paris, 2nd of Ventôse,  
Year III. of the Republic.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I write to you from the committee-room of the Twenty-one, who must decide our fate. I profit by D.'s journey near Vic to send you a dozen copies of my defence ; distribute them among my friends and relations. They will see that I have never swerved from that justice, humanity and honesty of which they have set me an example.

I am astonished at not having received any letters from you. You are easily frightened, and think much of solitude and life. As for me, my only fear is the violation of a principle or a lack of social virtues.

Some days after the arrest of Billaud, Collot and Barère, some officious people came and offered them passports and money to leave France. "The last," says an eye-witness, "was in such a rage that we should never have thought him capable of it, crying out that such a proposal was infamous, that life was not worth such cowardice. We shall go to the national tribunal to justify ourselves, to defend Liberty or perish with it."

The accused were protected by the great services they had recently rendered to the country, services that clamorous hatred could not so quickly efface ; they were protected by the thought that a new mutilation of the national representation would only justify the former ones, and by the fear that a condemnation of the acts of the Government during the revolutionary disturbances would only encourage to a dangerous degree the enemies of that Revolution. The debates in the Convention appeared to be taking a favourable turn for them. Barère's defence,

especially, met with continued applause from the Assembly. But their enemies suspended the sittings for four days after which a riot too opportune for its origin not to be gravely suspected, furnished a pretext to hurry on the judgment. Sentence was pronounced there and then on the 12th of Germinal, in the absence of the accused. Many other members of the Convention, of whom the reactionaries wished to rid themselves, were arrested at the same time, among them Lecointre, an honest man, who had gone over to the Mountain at the sight of the reaction.

Barère was still occupied in composing his defence when he was informed he had been sentenced to transportation. It was past ten o'clock at night. The next morning at eight, a carriage came for him, other carriages contained Billaud Varennes and Collot-d'Herbois.

But a threatening crowd obstructed the streets and uttered murderous cries against them. It was not, undoubtedly, the same crowd that the night before had imperiously shouted for their release. Did their enemies wish the rioters to kill them, as Barère thought? This prompt change of scene, and the enormous preparations employed for the departure of three persons seem to give some weight to his opinion, and what confirms it still more are the events that took place when Barère and Billaud had been brought back and placed provisionally in one of the rooms of the Committee of General Surety, their companion in misfortune having been able to pass the barrier. Talien proposed in the Convention to change their sentence of transportation to one of death, to be carried out on the spot, but it was rejected with horror.

At midnight only could they be led through Paris

on foot under the escort of a formidable detachment of soldiers, from the Tuileries to the Montrouge barrier, when they again got into carriages. They were received at several points on the road by mobs, which they considered their enemies had assembled; this was notably the case at Orleans, where their lives were seriously threatened.

The castle on the Isle of Oleron, the former residence of Eleanor of Guienne, had been transformed into a state prison. There they were incarcerated and treated with shameful severity, being put on siege rations, without being able to better their lot, for the suddenness of their arrest had left them almost without money or change of clothing.

The events of Prairial formed a new pretence of persecuting them. Barère, in speaking of these events, declares them to be "a riot paid for by foreigners and emigrant nobles." Generally he pays very great importance to the plans of the enemies of the Revolution, in order that they should be hated for their excesses. Sometimes it is Marat, sometimes Hébert and Chaumette, sometimes Barras, Tallien and Fréron, whom he accuses as being instigators of royalism. According to him, English gold played the chief part in our crises. We can entirely overlook its influence, but when we see historians and artists attributing the majority of the acts of the Revolution to venal passions, we are tempted in our turn to believe in a conspiracy got up to degrade our national reputation. For Barère's part such an exaggeration is due to resentment of the cruellest injustice.

Billaud-Varennes and Collot-d'Herbois were ordered to be shipped to Cayenne. Barère, for motives we do not

know, and which he himself seems to be unaware of, was not included in this order. He was transferred on foot by constables to Saintes Prison, where the criminal court was told to try him. Such a decision proved that he had not yet been tried—how then can the transportation of his colleagues be justified?

Those who ape the gilded youth of Paris in the provinces took pleasure in torturing their captive by giving him papers to read in which he and men of his way of thinking were outrageously insulted, and in paying people to sing in front of his door at night the threatening *Reveil du peuple*. The humanity of a warder and of the municipal authorities made his condition more bearable, he was fortunate enough to see his brother.

From this place, without being able to get a look at his accusation, he addressed a summary of his defence to his constituents, which has remained in manuscript, and which has furnished us with more than one page of this biography. Here also, as we have said, a battalion of his countrymen, on their way to join the army in La Vendée, obtained permission to visit him in prison and present him with the national flag that Barré had confided to them in 1792 with his own hands, a flag that was now riddled by bullets.

Barré devoted his enforced leisure in prison to his literary labours. He began to edit his *Memoirs*, and a few traces of this first attempt still remain, and he made long extracts from the books he read, particularly from the correspondence of Jean Jacques Rousseau<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Extracts were a great part of his method of work. This reminds me of a curious page I found among his papers. It was written on the



As Barère was classed among the suspected during the last years of the Empire, he avoided all political affairs, and lived the life of a man of letters. The results of his leisure were translations of Young (his favourite poet), of Tasso and Tyrtæus, a "History of the Neapolitan Revolutions," the "Travels of Plato in Italy," and several other writings, some published, the others left in manuscript. He was often at the Théâtre Français and at the Opera, where his taste and learning were much valued by the actors. Lesueur, Dalayrac, Steibelt, Lays, Talma, and Larive were his intimate friends and appreciated his advice. He even wrote studies on theatrical art, especially on Talma, which are not without importance.

Barère was much run after in society by reason of his witty, graceful conversation. "You are the nicest of men," wrote Dr. Alibert, who was a judge of men; "after seeing you I am witty for a whole week." One day that he had been dining with Madame Récamier, he sat next to La Harpe, who asked his hostess after dinner the name of his neighbour, adding, "One can easily see from his courteous grace of manner that he is one of the old nobility; your republicans are all so full of the rough ferocity of their opinions." Madame Récamier merely answered, with a smile, "He is one of my husband's friends; there are so many of them, that I cannot recall his name."

The events of 1814 interrupted the calmest, happiest period of Barère's life. At the approach of the storm, he had escorted the widow and daughter of one of his relations to the south, and he was there when the empire fell. The advance of the invading enemy drove him in succession, from Tarbes to Toulouse, Cahors, and finally to Limoges, whence he returned to the capital in the month of April.

France had accepted the return of the Bourbons through very weariness, and from a hope of necessary repose after such shocks. The generation of the Revolution was not without mistrust, but Napoleon's despotism had weighed so heavily on it that it did not display any hostility to his successors; they on their side promised to forget all disputes. A political reform seemed to be imminent, by no means as rapid and complete as the one that despotism had stopped, but at any rate capable of establishing a public spirit by degrees; so the authors of the first reform frankly joined the second. Personally Barère had no reason to expect, and did not expect, any favour from the new government; he was satisfied with being left in peace, and took up his old life again. The few pamphlets that he wrote during the first Restoration merely express liberal sentiments, with no hatred for the present, nor regret for the past.

The return from Elba does not seem to have excited him very much, and his *Memoirs* prove it. But it is astonishing that he does not mention in them an act worthy of his courage and the perseverance of his convictions. On the 21st of March, the day after Napoleon's entry into the Tuileries, Barère wrote him the following letter that his biographers ought to quote. It will be seen what authority some chroniclers have had to accuse him of conspiring in favour of Bonaparte's return.

SIR — A man who will always place liberty and country before all the illusions of power and all the ambitions of fortune, owes it to himself to give your Majesty, seated on the throne raised by the sovereignty of the people, the homage of truth. It generally has to force its way into the presence of ordinary kings, to-day it walks into Napoleon's palace by the strength of public opinion.

I prove my respect for your rule and for the power of the nation in telling you the truth. Those who seek by flattery and lying to obtain riches and influence outrage it.

were brought up under other conditions; we ought not to experience it under Napoleon, born of the Revolution itself. However this may be, a constitution is never a concession of the throne, but a conquest made by a nation of itself. In the gross ages of barbarism and despotism, governments are like fortresses that have to be taken, or disguised, or made to capitulate in order that nations may enjoy a really free constitution; but in periods full of education and liberty they must be conquered by reason, public opinion and necessity, which is also a power, in order to proclaim the declaration of the national rights, and to ensure civil rights and the ascendancy of law."

Barère continued in the path shown by the writings we have quoted. Having become a member of the Chamber of Representatives, he never ceased to urge the drafting of a constitution, based on that of 1791 and submitted to the approval of the nation. He even worked at the preparation of materials for it. When the ill-starred *additional clause* was issued, which afforded such little satisfaction to the expectations of the country, Barère thought it his duty to refuse to sign it. However, his opposition, entirely one of principle, was by no means cantankerous.

"If Napoleon," says he, "after the awful disaster of Waterloo, had had confidence in the representatives and had come before them like Varro, the Consul, not despairing of the safety of the country, they would have granted him soldiers and taxes, and his fatal abdication would not have taken place. What a misfortune it was that France ever separated its destiny, either of its

own record or not, from that of Napoleon! If revolutionary liberty could only have counted on his sword, it would have been the surest weapon with which to triumph over Europe. France would have been undoubtedly saved by his presence at her head, although some politicians wished to save her without him.

"The events of the war became so pressing," says he in another place, "that the Chamber of Representatives was surprised in the midst of its constitutional labours, but it would not separate without having left a solemn declaration of political principles and rights to future generations. This was done on the 7th of July, 1815, at the evening sitting, on the eve of the day its powers were shattered by superior force. Several days previously Garat had brought in a bill of rights, which although very short and incomplete, yet was supported energetically by Barrère and Poulain Grand Pré, as sanctioning the flight of the Bourbons, just as the bill of rights in England had sanctioned the flight of the Stuarts. This bill of Garat's amended by his two colleagues, was a kind of flag of liberty saved from the wholesale wreck. But as there existed a constitutional committee, charged with drawing up a complete constitution to be accepted by the King whoever he might be, it was necessary to wake it up and hasten on its work by a simple declaration of principles. Barrère first proposed one on the 5th of July, supported by M. Dupont de l'Eure who also read another bill drawn up by an outsider, M. Jullien of Paris. The Chamber referred these two drafts to a select committee of five, which made them into one. This is an instance of the political will of this assembly, that only lasted a month, but a month of energy, the most patriotic and national assembly after the Constitutional

and the Convention. It foresaw too well the cruel reaction that the King and the lords would bring with them, and so created obstacles for them, and it was generous enough to fling itself between them and France, crushed by a second invasion. The almost unanimous decision of the Chamber, the faithful, courageous representative of the French people, was authorised by its origin in the first assemblies and by the force of events to form a constitution to take the place of the granted charter, and to cause it to be accepted by this so-called legitimate King, who was marching with foreign levies over French corpses. It was neither frightened by German artillery, drawn up on the bridge opposite their House, nor by the pretended omnipotence of Wellington, hastening from Cambrai to Versailles, with halts at Louvres and Saint-Denis for his royal marionnette, who entered the Tuileries under cover of night. It wished, at any rate, to lay down the principles of liberty and nationality in the famous pronouncement of the 7th of July, 1815. In it are written for the benefit of a strong, free posterity the undoubted conditions of that representative government for which the French have fought since the 14th of July, 1789."

Barère spoke in the Chamber of Representatives with a remarkable vigour and ease of diction. I have seen some of his audience, who expected a model of eloquent demagoguery, and who could not recover from their surprise.

His moderate conduct should have preserved him from fresh persecution, but in 1815, as at every reaction, the punishment of certain acts was a pretext for punishing certain men. Among the rulers of this period were to be found those who ruled in 1795.

Barrère, whose name was to be found in the list of the 24th of July, remained in hiding in Paris until the amnesty of the following 12th of January, which banished him from France. Then he took refuge in Brussels, the centre of a colony of French exiles, especially of former members of the Convention. Some of them had made their country famous by their knowledge, talents and courage, others had occupied the highest posts in the public service, and most had left these exalted positions poor, several even were in want of necessaries without one of them ever compromising the dignity of misfortune. With difficulty did more fortunate colleagues succeed in fathoming the secret of their position, and make them accept slight help. There is a touching anecdote in Barrère's notes with reference to this.

"Mons, Brussels and Liege were the towns where French refugees mostly congregated. Among the former members of the Convention several bordered on a state of indigence. The rich ones formed a society to help them. M. Ramel de Nogaret was appointed collector and distributor of the subscriptions, and he fulfilled this humane mission with great zeal and tact. One of them, named Savornin, had not been willing to make his distress known, he lived in an obscure corner of the old town on the remains of his few savings. Having fallen ill, his needs increased, and the Belgian woman in whose house he was lodging took care of him at her own expense. M. Ramel having heard of M. Savornin's bad state of health discovered his lodgings and placed in his room the help of the society. The poor old man now needed no more. But finding out how he had been able to exist so long without resources M. Ramel learnt that his

generous landlady had pawned her own clothes and furniture to pay for the wants of the invalid. He hastened to redeem her goods, and continued to look after his former respected colleague. But illness and the misfortunes of exile had done their work; Savornin died; the society paid his debts and his funeral expenses.

“Several other members of the Convention received a fixed monthly sum from M. Ramel, and afterwards from his successor, M. Oudot. These indigent refugees, whose energy and devotion had saved France and her liberty, were in a majority among the exiles. During this period, Louis XVIII. was wasting the forty millions sterling in Paris that France had to raise to reward those who had betrayed her and fought against her.”

Barère was not reduced to live on the charity of others, honourable for them and glorious for the objects of it; but it was only by spending his modest patrimony, already much reduced, and adding to it the fruit of his literary labours that he managed to live. He had taken up his former studies and habits and supported, resignedly, the greatest trouble a patriot can suffer. The following reflections, which we choose from several others among his papers, prove the state of his thoughts:

“In an exile’s life, there is a continual energy that tyrants do not imagine, a moral energy that makes the exile’s courage greater than his misfortune.

“In the series of persecutions he experiences, there are sublime moments when, by a desperate effort of his mental over his physical nature, he conquers the violence and refinement of tyranny.

“The exile takes refuge in Providence, the supreme

protector of the oppressed He alone can turn an inspired look towards heaven

"The exile, in the midst of his troubles, has consolations unknown to his persecutors, he feels those incompressible impulses of the soul which can raise him above material restraints and bodily sufferings

"When I was exiled, I knelt on a stone in my prison in the Isle of Oleron and at Saintes and never has God so granted my vows and accepted my prayers. Every furious political party, every vile murderous passion was aroused against me, alone, unarmed, and a prisoner God alone could protect me

"Often had I in my mind those reassuring words of Cato that the struggle of a virtuous man against misfortune is a sight worthy of being regarded by God Cato's confidence had passed into my soul and consoled me. It was the hope of a Christian and the belief of an honest man, who felt he had an irreproachable conscience."

We have purposely chosen these extracts because they lead us to speak of Barere's religious opinions

The intensely changeable and impressionable man that we have depicted, who gave way so easily to the influences of the moment and of his surroundings never gave way at any time of his life to bold or scoffing irreligion We are not aware of a single word that fell from his lips or pen that is contradictory to the religious sentiments we have just quoted—that is to say, these sentiments were deeply rooted Although a follower of Voltaire in his studies and by the very nature of his mind, Barere was too much of a democrat at heart not to be just towards Christianity We find among his manu-



“The English government continues to occupy Passage, in Spain, a second Gibraltar; it keeps a consul at Algiers who refuses to recognise the French rule; it has penetrated into Afghanistan, and wishes to reach Cabul; it has seized Aden, in the Persian Gulf, whilst waiting to seize the Isthmus of Suez; it endeavours to counteract French influence in Mexico, La Plata and Monte Video; it covets Egypt and Syria.

“The Russian government, which always keeps its cyclopean eye fixed on Western Europe, stretches its iron arm over Caucasia, Circassia and Persia; it does not lose sight of the long-prepared armed occupation of Asia Minor, of the European provinces of Turkey and of Constantinople. Although it failed at Khiva in 1839, and has been repulsed from the Chinese frontier, the obstinate, ambitious Czar is preparing another expedition to seize Khiva and the banks of the Oxus, if he is not forestalled by an English army taking possession of the important places of that country.

“These two governments watch and measure each other, they talk of alliances and trick each other diplomatically, without interfering for a moment with their warlike preparations. France, who has no ambitious projects on hand, is fully taken up with her war against the Arabs in Algeria, with England's efforts to take Egypt and Russia's to take Asia Minor. England increases her navy, Russia her army, whilst Austria returns to its *status quo* after its invasion of Italy, and Prussia keeps up its system of peaceful neutrality by economy, only paying attention to German custom duties and religious schisms.

“The situation can be summed up thus: a universal hypocrisy of peace and a real hostile feeling, an inevitable

collision between two turbulent, ambitious powers—England and Russia. The inhabitants of Europe will be reduced to the old proverb *Quidquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi*.

"[July, 1840]—England wants a railway through Syria as a short cut to India. The English government will sacrifice the safety of the Ottoman Empire and the peace of Europe to this selfish interest. This naval power spurs nothing, and would set all Europe, Asia and Africa alight to preserve India with its 100 millions, who only work for a merchant company.

"The first care of the English government has been to prevent any friendliness between Mehemet Ali and the young Sultan. It takes care to warn the Porte of Egyptian ambition in order to conceal its own ambition to take advantage of the revolt of Syria to get possession of it for its own connection with India, the only feeder of English power.

"Its second care has been to get Russia interested in her old plans of the seizure of the Bosphorus and Asia Minor. The cabinet of St. James' will introduce the Russian armies into Constantinople as the price of her indulgence as to Syria. The Russian envoy, M. de Bronow, formed this gigantic plot at London with the Foreign Office, the cabinets of Berlin and Vienna have given their adherence, being reduced to mere military and political vassalage.

"Its third care has been to keep French influence out of Turkey and Egypt. And yet it has been difficult to act in a hostile spirit, France being the political ally of England. Lord Palmerston, who sticks at nothing that concerns extension of commerce or territory, or injury to France, has undertaken to start the Anglo-Russian

tage of the fret and fury of a *continental war* to seize the French and Dutch colonies. In the same manner in 1840 Russia wishes to concern France and other states in a *continental war* to seize the provinces of Turkey and Constantinople. These tactics, that have a hidden source and an assured subsidy, are developed by a coalition of four powers against one. They seek to weaken and ruin continental countries to make them powerless to prevent invasion and usurpation.

"The only thing to save Europe is a moral and military league against this fresh Holy Alliance of despots. If the peoples of Europe passively resist these allied governments the war will end for lack of combatants. If they claim their rights unanimously and courageously, this cry of freedom will startle their kings; Poland will arise from her ashes like a phoenix, Hungary will recover her liberty, Cracovia will no longer allow tyrants to protect her, the middle states of Germany will form a more homogeneous and powerful confederation, Prussia will no longer consent to be the tool of the Czar, Italy will free its nations from the oppressive Teutonic hordes, and Great Britain will no longer go unpunished for its naval tyranny, its usurpation of India and its commercial extension.

"[25th of August, 1840.]—The age of coalitions has passed. These political crusades no longer have fanaticism to fan them nor English loans to subsidise them. The four powers are penniless, and Lord Palmerston either cannot, or will not, make himself the *paymaster-general* of the continental war as William Pitt did.

"[4th of November, 1840.]—France has preserved the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Emp,

single handed France has twice interposed between Turkey and Egypt to pacify them Lord Ponsonby has gained the ear of the Porte, and by bribery and intimidation governs Turkey in the English way—*ie*, by making war for his own benefit, by making conquests in Syria for his own profit, and in keeping Russia at arm's length

"France has nothing to gain or to conquer in Turkey Her interest is in the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe and in the continuance of peace France only desires to preserve and defend the high position her power and moderation have gained for her If France were the peacemaker between Egypt and Turkey in 1833 and 1839, her conciliation was at any rate frank and disinterested, she upheld law and treaties in the Pasha's favour No European power can point to such an intervention nor offer such guarantees

"France has been deceived, forsaken and threatened by the English government, who have been in secret treaty against France with her eternal enemy Russia, and this monstrous treaty threatens the freedom of Europe if the English nation does not disavow and punish its ministers As a matter of fact whether Syria becomes the hereditary fief of Mehemet Ali Pasha, or returns to the Sultan as its suzerain, is not worth the armies that would be wasted, the millions that would be spent, and the dangers that would be encountered should the war become general

' The problem stated thus would have received a pacific solution but for the ambition of the English government, but for their desire to seize Adana, Candia, and especially the way to India through Syria The cabinet of St James alone wishes to profit by the

me. "You should thank your judges," said I, "for the delay which allowed your defence to be printed." Never in my life had I such a true, pure pleasure. "What a splendid return are the thanks of a poor or unfortunate person!" the Abbé Arnaud used to say.

The deed is done; I am a lawyer for life. I am now one of the knights of the long robe, who fight in their own way. "*Militant quoque causarum patroni*," said the Roman laws.

Having enlisted in this Ciceronian militia, I hasten to inform the author of my being of my first success. I had often heard him boast complacently of the talents of the celebrated lawyers of the parliament of Toulouse. My father replied by sending me, as a reward for my first legal success, a hundred louis with which to buy a small library. Alas! my father little thought that, by thus feeding my appetite for books, he was giving me a taste for legislation, public law and literature, which would result in my entering that wretched career of politics in which only slaves, intriguers and rascals succeed, and in which everything is against talents, patriotism and honesty.

I spent my happy youth in studying law and in cultivating literature. I gave up a part of my leisure to music and politics; one served as the relaxation from the other.

The Academy of the Floral Games proposed as the subject of a prize for oratory the Eulogy of Louis XII. — "the only king whose memory the people praise," as Mercier of the Institute said. I had always thought his reign the finest in chivalry, military and literary fame, in the midst of the gloom that enshrouded

France Especially did I think his administration and public economy praiseworthy in an age when that science, which has created so many modern quacks, did not exist It is true that if *the friendship of a great man is a present of the gods*, Louis XII can flatter himself with having been so favoured, having had as his friend and chief minister the famous and beneficent Cardinal, George d Amboise

On re reading the history of France, my mind is again kindled by this monarch's glory, and I start composing a eulogium to compete in the Floral Games The Academy regards my work favourably, prints it in its transactions, but does not award the prize However, that was my first step on an academic career, because I loved the fine reign, unequalled in our annals, of Louis XII, that generous prince who, after he had been shut up for three years in an iron cage at Tours during the reign of Charles VIII, spoke, on mounting the throne, to his brutal, vindictive courtiers those words, too often forgotten by later kings of France "The King of France does not avenge the quarrels of the Duke of Orleans", of that King who, when he had taken Genoa by assault, spared the conquered, and entered the town after pardoning all the inhabitants He used to carry a shield on which was a king surrounded by bees, and this motto "*Non aculeo utitur rex*" How petty and mean our kings appear who will neither learn nor forget, to whom pardon and forgiveness are impossibilities

Shortly after the Academy of Toulouse had caused men of letters to remember Louis XII, the Academy of Letters of Montauban proposed the Eulogy of George d Amboise

Commons (to the number of 600) put on their hats, and thus debated the annulling of the King's regulations and of the King's session, which had violated the rights of the French people. All this would be treated to-day as rebellion; but it was only through the courage of its representatives that the French could regain and preserve their rights.

*The Count d'Artois and Louis XVI. (Episode.)*

These events are undoubtedly known; but here are some that are not. When the King had got into his carriage, which stood in the grand avenue of the castle, M. d'Artois bent forward and told him that the deputies of the Commons refused to leave the chamber, and that they ought to be sabred by the bodyguard. The King, in these words, coldly replied:

"To the castle!"

M. d'Artois insisted more energetically:

"Give the order for them to be cut down; otherwise all is lost."

"Go and do it yourself."

More insistence. The King, growing impatient, said to M. d'Artois:

"Go to the devil! To the castle, to the castle!"

I have these facts from one of the bodyguard, one of my countrymen, and from the King's private physician.

*The Queen's Plan.*

The events of the 14th of July, with their antecedents and their effects are known. What is less known is the plan conceived by the Queen to bombard

the Chamber of Deputies during the night of July 12th 13th, whilst an order was given to arrest those deputies who were about to leave Paris during the night of the 12th on the road to Sevres. I was one of these, and, leaving at nine in the evening for Versailles with several colleagues, I was stopped before I got to Sèvres on the bridge, first by some cavalry officers and afterwards by some artillerymen, but our energetic threats caused our release, but we did not get to Versailles until midnight. It was just when the Court was busy in devising schemes to disperse all the deputies of the Commons, to send them back to their provinces, and to put into execution the reforms published at the famous *lit de justice* of the month of June.

This project, started on the evening of the 21st, did not succeed, in spite of the fervid wishes of the Court. We had proofs that the Court party wished to force the King to disperse the deputies and arrest sixty nine of them, of whom we procured the list. These were to be imprisoned in the citadel of Metz, and afterwards to be executed as rebels. This is always the way of this Court and of this *famille*. The Count de Mirabeau was the first name inscribed on this order of proscription, with Chapelier, Target, Barnave, Sieyès, Bailly, Camus, some Breton deputies, and those who edited newspapers, on this last account I had the honour of appearing on this list.

#### *Marshal de Broglie*

The Marshal de Broglie thought it his duty to make sure of the fidelity of the artillerymen who were drawn up in the great park of artillery which occupied the Queen's stables. On the 13th of July, about midnight,



like a talisman. Meeting the King and his family, who had hitherto been escorted from Varennes by four deputies sent by the National Assembly, we surrounded the carriages. But when they reached the terrace of the palace to put down the King and his family at the central or clock gate, the rage of the crowd broke out anew with such violence as to make me tremble for the King's life, and still more for that of the Queen, on whom the imprecations poured with terrifying unanimity. Another deputy (M. Grégoire) and myself then determined to take charge of the young Dauphin, and we carried him indoors. Then the King got out, surrounded by fifteen of us; the other fifteen remained with the Queen, who earnestly implored their help.

After having seen the King to his apartments, we rushed to find the Queen; we found great difficulty in getting to her carriage; it was almost impossible to penetrate the crowd and keep one's head in this tumult, where one heard nothing but strident voices and furious yells from those who would not let the Queen enter the Tuileries. Half an hour elapsed, when the deputies closed up and formed a double rank from the carriage to the door. The Queen got out, much frightened and in tears. She was at last rescued and led by us to the King. It was a grand sight to see the deep feelings of gratitude which the Queen now evinced to us! These demonstrations of regard redoubled when she saw the King and her children again. The King desired us to thank the National Assembly for all the zeal they had shown to rescue them under such difficult circumstances. We waited until the crowd in the Tuileries had somewhat dimin-

ished and popular feeling calmed down, so that when we had gone the King would have nothing to fear.

We returned to the Assembly, where much uneasiness existed as to the issue of our mission. One of us made a satisfactory report, and the Assembly went on with its work.

### *Flight of the King, 1791.*

The country was really in danger from the events of the 21st of June, 1791, as it had been from those of the 12th of June, 1789, because of the military movements around Paris. However, in 1791, by the time that the constitutional decrees had been discussed and approved, the interest of the nation, the supreme law of the popular welfare, and of the constitutional laws, protected the throne as with a veil, in order that the representatives of the nation should not seek for an offender there. The law was silent, and the prince was led astray by his courtiers, guided chiefly by the Austrian clique.

The National Assembly was obliged to be prudent, all the more because it included the powerful party of the two Lameths, Barnave, Menou, Laborde, Talleyrand, and some other deputies of the Constitutional Committee, who were still inclined to keep Louis XVI. on the throne, in spite of his glaring desertion. The Assembly was therefore obliged to assume the attitude that imperious circumstances imposed on it. The King was not declared in fault, and a committee was named to revise the constitutional decrees, to enlarge the royal prerogative, and to take away the causes of the protest written by Louis XVI, which he left behind on leaving for foreign parts or

for some stronghold on the frontier. Public opinion was against the ideas of this revision; there was great perturbation of spirit, and all appeared desirous to move the Constitutional Assembly, by petition, to declare the abdication of Louis XVI.

The Society of the Friends of the Constitution (under the name of Jacobins) excited the people the more by propositions tending towards a fresh revolutionary rising, of which no human foresight could predict either the extent or duration, especially with representatives flouted by calumny and wearied with a three years' permanent session.

It was unwise to expose France so lightly to a change of constitution and to a new form of government, as the predilections of the French had forced the National Assembly to continue the monarchy in spite of its feeling and of its democratic laws.

The Jacobins carried their pretensions so far as to rise against the National Assembly and its decrees by various motions and discussions. But, under these circumstances, it was very dangerous for the interests of public peace that popular societies should oppose the law and thus give fatal examples to the citizens, so the deputies ceased to attend the sittings of the Jacobin society, and confined their deliberations on the welfare of the country to the Assembly.

Several placards demanding a republic had been stuck up in Paris, even on the doors of the Constituent Assembly. Indeed, republican ideas were no strangers to the feelings of this courageous majority of representatives, who had established liberty and equality, had abolished feudalism, aristocracy, nobility, and parliaments, and had restricted the power of

the clergy. But they thought monarchical forms could preside over democratic institutions, provided the royal authority was very limited, and severely circumscribed by the Constitutional Act and the authority of ministers and other officials.

Nevertheless, the mob was very excited, and collected in the Champ de Mars in order to sign, on the altar of the country, a petition to the National Assembly in order that the abdication of Louis XVI. might be proclaimed. The royal party in the Assembly had elected as president for the fortnight M de Lameth, an old and trusted aristocrat in a democratic mask. He it was who received from that section, which had been termed by Mirabeau the Thirty Voices (in allusion to the Thirty Tyrants of Athens), the secret authority to give Bailly, the mayor of Paris, and Lafayette, the commandant of the National Guard, orders to expel the petitioners of the Champ de Mars by armed force and to fire on the people.<sup>1</sup>

The National Assembly would not have permitted this, any such measure would have been rejected with indignation. It knew nothing about such a step, and only learned of its existence by its results and by the yell of public indignation. So, in order to palliate this step, false and exaggerated reports were made on the hidden intentions of this meeting, which was represented as a fanatical onslaught on the republican form of government.

This sanguinary event on the Champ de Mars

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<sup>1</sup> M Charles Lameth has been so strangely misled as to boast in the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies in 1832 of having given an order in July 1791 as President of the National Assembly, to fire on the people.—NOTE BY BARRETT

opened a path to the cunning authors of the revision of the constitutional decrees, who joined the members of the Constitutional Committee to alter the existing decrees and enlarge the royal prerogative, with the intention of causing Louis XVI. to accept the constitution and conquer his repugnance to divest himself of the ancient authority. This is the cause of the outcry raised against the Constitutional Act since its birth; an outcry which caused much trouble, and brought about the events of the 10th of August, 1792.

*Revision of the Constitution.*

Since this deplorable and only too memorable time, two great objects occupied the thoughts of the députés: the first, to settle the various constitutional decrees so as to form a political machine of them, a social mechanism capable of securing public order and the prosperity of the nation; the second, to decide to what royal person could be confided the execution of these constitutional laws, which would constitute a great and delicate innovation on the customs and government of France.

As to the first question, we resolved to codify all the various constitutional decrees and separate them from mere acts of procedure. This end was not attained; and what was then called the revision was gone on with, and, under the pretext of revision, they reformed, mutilated, and left the constitution without form or harmony, that is to say, left it deprived of that political vigour which alone makes for progress and solidarity. They mixed up too many acts of procedure with others purely constitutional; they imposed too many limits on the mistrusted royal authority;

they weakened it, and thus being impotent it only conspired for more power. The truth is, in organising political powers, the executive has naturally such strength that, if not adequately endowed with power, it only seeks to extend its sphere, if you render it powerless it usurps. The National Assembly absolutely failed as regards its section on royal and executive powers.

Who would have thought that among the seven hundred deputies who formed the majority—in other words, the Left of the Assembly—there were only thirty five of us to oppose the revision, that is, this small but influential and working number which had promised to resist Louis XVI, notwithstanding his flight to Varennes, and endow him with greater power? What could thirty five deputies do against a mass of seven hundred, headed by the Constitutional Committee and by several skilful intriguers? We did obtain, by our opposition, the amendment of several sections and of several constitutional enactments more favourable to public liberty, but the revision itself produced a constitution without vigour or balance.

As to the second question, that of selecting a royal person to whom to confide the administration of the constitution, the Assembly had many ideas. One of these was to continue the King's authority, in spite of the occurrences of the 21st of June, and to avoid the Queen's regency during the minority of her son. Another one was to found a National Council of regency over the young Dauphin, and only to leave the King a handsome income, with a palace and hunting grounds, and leave the Queen the simple care of the hereditary prince. Nobody thought of the Orleans

branch since the occurrences of the 5th and 6th of October, 1789, although that branch comprised three young and well-educated princes, constitutionally inclined, whose principles seemed to promise the country more stability and more attachment to the new *régime*.

When a regency was spoken of, the deputies saw in this contingency merely a vast area for constitution-makers and for clever intriguers at the Court. Possibly the Assembly, as a whole, possessed too much honesty and patriotism, as, by a solemn and unanimous decree, it permanently deprived its members of all ministerial functions. The same disinterested feeling and of dislike of ambition caused the rejection of a regency. It was requisite, therefore, to stand by the King, who had convoked the States-General; and, in the doubtful state of affairs, this selection was probably the most just and inevitable.

The only requisite was that Louis XVI., to secure a happy reign and strengthen the fresh legislation, should have good ministers, a wise, sincere council, and public functionaries taken from those men who had compiled the constitution.

#### *Intriguers of the Lameth Party.*

The art of stirring up revolts in the Constituent Assembly is due to the Lameth party. The discontent of the populace of Paris had been excited on the subject of the flight of Louis XVI.; on the 21st of June his abdication was called for; a petition to this effect was to have been signed on the altar of the country in the Champ de Mars. This cabal was organised, and the National Guard was to have been its docile instrument. M. Charles Lameth was elected during this July as

fortnightly president of the Assembly. He it was who, of his own accord, gave the order to M Bailly, the mayor, and to General Lafayette to clear the Champ de Mars by armed force. The order was only too ruthlessly executed. The National Guard fired upon the mob, and many were killed or wounded.

The National Assembly did not share in the movements of this martial indignation, but it found it would be impolitic to censure it. The Lameth party profited by this inaction, it had instigated this attack on the people by the guard established for their defence and for the support of constitutional decrees.

Consequently the Lameth party demanded to be named as assistant members of the Constitutional Committee, in order to proceed to a general revision of the constitutional decrees, with the object of putting them in accord and codifying them in one statute.

Thenceforth the committee with its assistants had no other object than to reform those decrees which had settled and limited the royal prerogative. They increased it in several of the attributes, under the pretence of thus securing its adoption by Louis XVI, who had, since the 21st of June, 1791, when he fled from the *Tuileries* towards the northern frontier, expressly protested against the constitutional decrees.

The decrees were revised, toned down in parts, and augmented by fresh resolutions, and Thouret brought a compact edition, under the title of a constitutional statute, before the National Assembly, in the name of the Revision Committee.

It was vehemently opposed and modified several times by thirty five deputies, who declared themselves discontented with this partial revision. These were



Pétion de Villeneuve, Buzot, Roederer, Barère de Vieuzac, Robespierre, Bouché, and some others whose names do not occur in the debates on the revision, collected in the *Moniteur* and other journals of the end of July, and of August and September, 1791.

This untimely and insidious revision was the apple of discord thrown into the National Assembly by intriguing royalty. The patriotic party kept aloof; the revising party, profiting by the weariness of an Assembly which had held a permanent session of three years, was both blamed and attacked by the Society of the Friends of the Constitution, sitting at the Jacobin Club. The revision caused the Assembly, which in reality was the most patriotic, the most rational, the most reformatory, and the wisest France had ever seen, to be grossly calumniated. The revision also depreciated the constitutional statute in public opinion, and the Constituent Assembly disappeared without causing any regret.

*The King accepts the Constitution.*

At last, in the month of September, 1791, the constitution was accepted by Louis XVI. with a solemnity and an abnegation to the wishes of the nation which seemed to forebode a happy future.

Why, then, accuse the French nation of being neither generous nor confiding? It ignored all the obstacles put forward by the court and the ministry to hinder the work of the constitution and the establishment of public rights, and invested the King with royal authority afresh. At the public demonstration given on the day of the acceptance and promulgation of the constitutional laws, was seen

the spectacle of a people intoxicated with joy, enthusiastic as regarded their King, and begging him to enjoy his own again, after a three years' revolution.

The French were then far from suspecting that the King's ministers were seeking to grasp a more absolute power than that with which the constitution had endowed them, that fresh deputies in the Legislative Assembly would nullify and reverse the new constitution instead of carrying it out, and that from this blind and fatal alliance of the Court and the Legislative Assembly would spring a terrible sanguinary revolution, destructive of national prosperity, and lasting several years. There was not one good citizen, not one wise person, who did not desire, in 1791, that the Constituent Assembly should resolve itself into a Legislative Assembly, itself to administer its constitution, to elevate its mission by wisdom and moderation, and give the people and the King a solemn example of obedience to the laws emanating from national sovereignty.

But these wishes of the enlightened public and the true friends of liberty were not realised. The Assembly wished to show itself generous it was only imprudent; it committed suicide by its own disinterestedness; it destroyed the constitution by giving it over to grumblers, who hated all that did not emanate from themselves, and thought themselves better legislators than the Constituent Assembly.

*On the Constituent Assembly, from 1789 to September, 1791.*

The Constituent Assembly has been accused, half a century after its existence, by men who profited by its work, and who, in 1834, would have been nothing if